

Uneven Numbering of Pages

THE STUDY
OF WORDS



FRENCH

THE STUDY OF WORDS

PRACTICAL ENGLISH SERIES

THE STUDY OF WORDS

BY
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CONDENSED BY
GRENVILLE KLEISER

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TO THE STUDENT

THESE interesting and helpful lectures on "The Study of Words," by Professor Trench, are reprinted here for your convenience in condensed form. I have been careful not to omit anything likely to be of practical value to you in your study of English. As Professor Trench himself says, "A man's first discovery that words are living powers, has been like the dropping of scales from his eyes, like the acquiring of another sense, or the introduction into a new world"—and it is with this thought in mind that I commend these talks to your earnest consideration.

GRENVILLE KLEISER.

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FIRST TALK
INTRODUCTORY

FIRST TALK

INTRODUCTORY

THERE are few who would not readily acknowledge that mainly in worthy books are preserved and hoarded the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which the world has accumulated; and that chiefly by aid of these they are handed down from one generation to another. I shall urge on you in these talks something different from this; namely, that not in books only, which all acknowledge, nor yet in connected oral discourse, but often also in words contemplated singly, there are boundless stores of moral and historic truth, and no less of passion and imagination, laid up—that from these, lessons of infinite worth may be derived, if only our attention is roused to their existence. I shall urge on you how well it will repay you to study the words which you are in the habit of using or of meeting, be they such as relate to highest spiritual things, or our common words of the shop or market, and all the familiar intercourse of life. It will, indeed, repay you far better than you can easily believe. I am sure, at least, that for many a young man his first discovery of the fact that words are living powers, are the vesture, yea, even the body,

which thoughts weave for themselves, has been like the dropping of scales from his eyes, like the acquiring of another sense, or the introduction into a new world; he is never able to cease wondering at the moral marvels that surround him on every side, and ever reveal themselves more and more to his gaze.

We, indeed, hear it not seldom said that ignorance is the mother of admiration. No falser word was ever spoken, and hardly a more mischievous one; implying, as it does, that this healthiest exercise of the mind rests, for the most part, on a deceit and a delusion, and that with better knowledge it would cease; while, in truth, for once that ignorance leads us to admire that which with fuller insight we should perceive to be a common thing, and one demanding therefore no such tribute from us, an hundred, nay, a thousand times, it prevents us from admiring that which is admirable indeed. And this is so, whether we are moving in the region of nature, which is the region of God's wonders, or in the region of art, which is the region of man's wonders; and nowhere truer than in this sphere and region of language, which is about to claim us now. Oftentimes here we walk up and down in the midst of intellectual and moral marvels with a vacant eye and a careless mind, even as some traveler passes unmoved over fields of fame, or through cities of ancient renown, unmoved, because utterly unconscious

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of the lofty deeds which there have been wrought, of the great hearts which spent themselves there. We, like him, wanting the knowledge and insight which would have served to kindle admiration in us, are oftentimes deprived of this pure and elevating excitement of the mind, and miss no less that manifold teaching and instruction which ever lie about our path, and nowhere more largely than in our daily words, if only we knew how to put forth our hands and make it our own. "What riches," one exclaims, "lie hidden in the vulgar tongue of our poorest and most ignorant. What flowers of paradise lie under our feet, with their beauties and their parts undistinguished and undiscerned, from having been daily trodden on."

This subject upon which we are thus entering ought not to be a dull or uninteresting one in the handling, or one to which only by an effort you will yield the attention which I shall claim. If it shall prove so, this I fear must be through the fault of my manner of treating it; for certainly in itself there is no study which *may* be made at once more instructive and entertaining than the study of the use, origin, and distinction of words, which is exactly that which I now propose to myself and to you. I remember a very learned scholar, to whom we owe one of our best Greek lexicons, a book which must have cost him years, speaking in the preface to his

great work with a just disdain of some, who complained of the irksome drudgery of such toils as those which had engaged him so long—thus irksome, forsooth, because they only had to do with words; of them who claimed pity for themselves, as tho they had been so many galley-slaves chained to the oar, or martyrs who had offered themselves to the good of the literary world. He declares that, for his part, the task of classing, sorting, grouping, comparing, tracing the derivation and usage of words, had been to him no drudgery, but a delight and labor of love.

If this may be true with regard to a foreign tongue, how much truer ought it to be with regard to our own, our “mother tongue,” as we affectionately call it. A great writer not very long departed from us has borne witness at once to the pleasantness and profit of this study. “In a language,” he says, “like ours, where so many words are derived from other languages, there are few modes of instruction more useful or more amusing than that of accustoming young people to seek for the etymology or primary meaning of the words they use. There are cases in which more knowledge of more value may be conveyed by the history of a word than by the history of a campaign.”

And, implying the same truth, a popular American author has somewhere characterized language as “fossil poetry.” He evidently

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means that just as in some fossil, curious and beautiful shapes of vegetable or animal life, the graceful fern or the finely vertebrated lizard, such as now, it may be, have been extinct for thousands of years, are permanently bound up with the stone, and rescued from that perishing which would have otherwise been theirs—so in words are beautiful thoughts and images, the imagination and the feeling of past ages, of men long since in their graves, of men whose very names have perished, these, which would so easily have perished, too, preserved and made safe forever. The phrase is a striking one; the only fault which one might be tempted to find with it is, that it is too narrow. Language may be, and indeed is, this “fossil poetry”; but it may be affirmed of it with exactly the same truth that it is fossil ethics, or fossil history. Words quite as often and as effectually embody facts of history, or convictions of the moral common sense, as of the imagination or passion of men; even as, so far as that moral sense may be perverted, they will bear witness and keep a record of that perversion. On all these points I shall enter at full in after talks; but I may give by anticipation, a specimen or two of what I mean, to make my purpose and plan more intelligible.

Language, then, is fossil poetry; in other words, we are not to look for the poetry which a people may possess only in its poems, or its

poetical customs, traditions, and beliefs. Many a single word also is itself a concentrated poem, having stores of poetical thought and imagery laid up in it. Examine it, and it will be found to rest on some deep analogy of things natural and things spiritual; bringing those to illustrate and to give an abiding form and body to these. The image may have grown trite and ordinary now; perhaps through the help of this very word may have become so entirely the heritage of all, as to seem little better than a commonplace; yet not the less he who first discerned the relation, and devised the new word which should express it, or gave to an old, never before but literally used, this new and figurative sense, this man was in his degree a poet—a maker, that is, of things which were not before, which would not have existed but for him, or for some other gifted with equal powers. “In our ordinary language,” as Montaigne has said, “there are several excellent phrases and metaphors to be met with, of which the beauty is withered by age, and the color is sullied by too common handling; but that takes nothing from the relish to an understanding man, neither does it derogate from the glory of those ancient authors, who, ’tis likely, first brought those words into that luster.”

He who spake first of a “dilapidated” fortune, what an image must have arisen up before his mind’s eye of some falling house or

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palace, stone detaching itself from stone, till all had gradually sunk into desolation and ruin. Or he who to that Greek word which signifies "that which will endure to be held up to and judged by the sunlight," gave first its ethical signification of "sincere," "truthful," or, as we sometimes say, "transparent," can we deny to him the poet's feeling and eye? Many a man had gazed, we are sure, at the jagged and indented mountain ridges of Spain before one called them "sierras," or "saws," the name by which they are now known, as *Sierra Morena*, *Sierra Nevada*; but that man coined his imagination into a word, which will endure as long as the everlasting hills which he named.

"Iliads without a Homer," some one has called, with a little exaggeration, the beautiful but anonymous ballad poetry of Spain. One may be permitted, perhaps, to push the exaggeration a little further in the same direction, and to apply the same language not merely to a ballad, but to a word. For poetry, which is passion and imagination, embodying themselves in words, does not necessarily demand combined words for this; of this passion and imagination, a single word may be the vehicle. As the sun can image itself alike in a tiny dew-drop or in the mighty ocean, and can do it, tho on a different scale, as perfectly in the one as in the other, so the spirit of poetry can dwell in

and glorify alike a word and an Iliad. Nothing in language is too small, as nothing is too great, for it to fill with its presence. Every where it can find, or, not finding, can make a shrine for itself, which afterward it can render translucent and transparent with its own indwelling glory. On every side we are beset with poetry. Popular language is full of it, of words used in an imaginative sense of things called—and not merely in transitory moments of high passion, and in the transference which at such moments finds place of the image to the thing imaged, but permanently—by names having immediate reference not to what they are, but to what they are like.

Let me illustrate my meaning somewhat more at length by the word “tribulation.” We all know in a general way that this word which occurs not seldom in Scripture and in the Liturgy, means affliction, sorrow, anguish; but it is quite worth our while to know *how* it means this, and to question the word a little closer. It is derived from the Latin “tribulum,” which was the thrashing instrument or roller, whereby the Roman husbandman separated the corn from the husks; and “tribulatio” in its primary significance was the act of this separation. But some Latin writers of the Christian Church appropriated the word and image for the setting forth of a higher truth; and sorrow, distress, and adversity being the appointed means for the

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separating in men of whatever in them was light, trivial and poor from the solid and the true, their chaff from their wheat, therefore he called these sorrows and trials "tribulations," thrashings, that is, of the inner spiritual man, without which there could be no fitting him for the heavenly garner. Now in proof of my assertion that a single word is often a concentrated poem, a little grain of gold capable of being beaten out into a broad extent of gold-leaf, I will quote, in reference to this very word "tribulation," a graceful composition by George Wither, an early English poet, which you will at once perceive is all wrapt up in this word, being from first to last only the expanding of the image and thought which this word has implicitly given; these are his lines:

"Till from the straw, the flail, the corn doth beat,
Until the chaff be purged from the wheat,
Yea, till the mill the grains in pieces tear,
The richness of the flour will scarce appear.
So, till men's persons great afflictions touch,
If worth be found, their worth is not so much,
Because, like wheat in straw, they have not yet
That value which in thrashing they may get.
For till the bruising flails of God's corrections
Have thrashed out of us our vain affections;
Till those corruptions which do misbecome us
Are by Thy sacred Spirit winnowed from us;
Until from us the straw of worldly treasures,
Till all the dusty chaff of empty pleasures,
Yea, till His flail upon us He doth lay,
To thrash the husk of this our flesh away;

And leave the soul uncovered; nay, yet more,
Till God shall make our very spirit poor,
We shall not up to highest wealth aspire;
But then we shall; and that is my desire."

This deeper religious use of the word "tribulation" was unknown to classical, that is to heathen, antiquity, and belongs exclusively to the Christian writers; and the fact that the same deepening and elevating of the use of words recurs in a multitude of other, and many of them far more striking instances, is one well deserving to be followed up. Nothing, I am persuaded, would more strongly bring before us what a new power Christianity was in the world than to compare the meaning which so many words possess before its rise, and the deeper meaning which they obtained, so soon as they were assumed by it as the vehicles of its life, the new thought and feeling enlarging, purifying, and ennobling the very words which they employed. This is a subject which I shall have occasion to touch on more than once in these talks, but is itself well worthy of, as it would afford ample material for, a volume.

But it was said just now that words often contain a witness for great moral truths—God having imprest such a seal of truth upon language that men are continually uttering deeper things than they know, asserting mighty principles, it may be asserting them against themselves, in words that to them may

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seem nothing more than the current coin of society. Thus to what grand moral purposes Bishop Butler turns the word "pastime"; how solemn the testimony which he compels the world, out of its own use of this word, to render against itself—obliging it to own that its amusements and pleasures do not really satisfy the mind and fill it with the sense of an abiding and satisfying joy; * they are only "pastime"; they serve only, as this word confesses, to *pass* away the *time*, to prevent it from hanging, an intolerable burden, on men's hands; all which they can do at the best is to prevent men from discovering and attending to their own internal poverty and dissatisfaction and want. He might have added that there is the same acknowledgment in the word "diversion," which means no more than that which *diverts* or turns us aside from ourselves, and in this way helps us to forget ourselves for a little. And thus it would appear that, even according to the

*Curiously enough Montaigne has in his Essays drawn the same testimony out of the word: "This ordinary phrase of past-time, and passing away the time, represents the custom of those 'wise' sort of people who think they can not have a better account of their lives than to let them run out and slide away, to pass them over and to balk them, and, as much as they can, to take no notice of them, and to shun them, as something of troublesome and contemptible equality. But I know life to be another kind of thing, and I find it both valuable and commodious even in its latest decay, wherein I now enjoy it. But nature has delivered it into our hands in such and so favorable circumstances that we commonly complain of ourselves if life be troublesome to us or slide unprofitably away."

world's own confession, all which it proposes is—not to make us happy, but a little to prevent us from remembering that we are unhappy, to *pass* away our *time*, to *divert* us from ourselves. While on the other hand we declare that the good which *will* really fill our souls and satisfy them to the uttermost, is not *in* us, but *without* us and *above* us, in the words which we use to set forth any transcending delight. Take three or four of these words—"transport," "rapture," "ravishment," "ecstasy"—"transport," that which *carries* us, as "rapture," or "ravishment," that which *snatches* us out of and above ourselves; and "ecstasy" is very nearly the same, only drawn from the Greek.

And not less, where a perversion of the moral sense has found place, words preserve oftentimes a record of this perversion. We have signal examples of this, even where there is notable evidence of the manner in which moral contagion, spreading from heart and manners, invades the popular language in the use, or rather misuse, of words.

The manner in which "lewd," which meant at one time no more than "lay," or unlearned—the "lewd" people, the lay people—should come to signify the sinful, the vicious, is not a little worthy of note. How forcibly we are reminded here of that saying of the Pharisees of old: "This people which knoweth not the law is curst"; how much of their spirit must

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have been at work before the word could have acquired this secondary meaning!

But language is fossil history as well. What a record of great social revolutions, revolutions in nations and in the feelings of nations, the one word "frank" contains, which is used, as we all know, to express aught that is generous, straightforward, and free. The Franks, I need not remind you, were a powerful German tribe, or association of tribes, which at the breaking up of the Roman Empire possessed themselves of Gaul, to which they gave their own name. They were the ruling, conquering people, honorably distinguished from the Gauls and degenerate Romans among whom they established themselves by their independence, their love of freedom, their scorn of a lie; they had, in short, the virtues which belong to a conquering and dominant race in the midst of an inferior and conquered one. And thus it came to pass that by degrees the name "frank," which may have originally indicated merely a national, came to involve a moral distinction as well; and a "frank" man was synonymous not merely with a man of the conquering German race, but was an epithet applied to a person possessed of certain high moral qualities, which for the most part appertained to, and were found only in, men of that stock; and thus in men's daily discourse, when they speak of a person as being "frank," or when they use the words "franchise," "en-

franchisement," to express civil liberties and immunities, their language here is the outgrowth, the record, and the result of great historic changes, bears testimony to facts of history, whereof it may well happen that the speakers have never heard.

Having given by anticipation this handful of examples in illustration of what in these talks I propose, I will, before proceeding further, make a few observations on a subject, which, if we would go at all to the root of the matter, we can scarcely leave altogether untouched—I mean the origin of language; in which, however, we will not entangle ourselves deeper than we need. There are, or rather there have been, two theories about this. One, and that which rather has been, than now is, for few maintain it still, would put language on the same level with the various arts and inventions with which man has gradually adorned and enriched his life. It would make him by degrees to have invented it, just as he might have invented any of these, for himself; and from rude, imperfect beginnings, the inarticulate cries by which he express his natural wants, the sounds by which he sought to imitate the impression of natural objects upon him, little by little to have arrived at that wondrous organ of thought and feeling, which his language is often to him now.

It might, I think, be sufficient to object to

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this explanation, that language would then be an *accident* to human nature; and, this being the case, that we certainly should somewhere encounter tribes sunken so low as not to possess it; even as there is no human art or invention, tho it be as simple and obvious as the preparing of food by fire, but there are those who have fallen below its exercise. But with language it is not so. There have never yet been found human beings, not the most degraded horde of South-African bushmen, or Papuan cannibals, who did not employ this means of intercourse with one another. But the more decisive objection to this view of the matter is, that it hangs together with, and is indeed an essential part of, that theory of society, which is contradicted alike by every page of Genesis, and every notice of our actual experience—the “orang-utan” theory, as it has been so happily termed—that, I mean, according to which the primitive condition of man was the savage one, and the savage himself the seed out of which in due time the civilized man was unfolded; whereas, in fact, so far from being this living seed, he might more justly be considered as a dead, withered leaf, torn violently away from the great trunk of humanity, and with no more power to produce anything nobler than himself out of himself than that dead, withered leaf to unfold itself into the oak of the forest. So far from being the child with the latent capacities of man-

hood, he is himself rather the man prematurely aged, and decrepit, and outworn.

But the truer answer to the inquiry how language arose is this, that God gave man language, just because He gave him reason (for what is man's word but his reason coming forth, so that it may behold itself?); that He gave it to him because he could not be man—that is, a social being—without it. Yet this must not be taken to affirm that man started at the first furnished with a full-formed vocabulary of words, and, as it were, with his first dictionary and first grammar ready-made to his hands. He did not thus begin the world *with names*, but *with the power of naming*: for man is not a mere speaking machine; God did not teach him words, as one of us teaches a parrot, from without; but gave him a capacity, and then evoked the capacity which He gave. Here, as in everything else that concerns the primitive constitution, the great original institutes, of humanity, our best and truest lights are to be gotten from the study of the first three chapters of Genesis; and you will observe that there it is not God who imposed the first names on the creatures, but Adam—Adam, however, at the direct suggestion of his Creator. He brought them all, we are told, to Adam, “to see what he would call them, and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof” (Gen. 2:19). Here we have the clearest in-

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timation of the origin, at once divine and human, of speech; while yet neither is so brought forward as to exclude or obscure the other.

So far we may concede a limited amount of right to those who have held a progressive acquisition, on man's part, of the power of embodying thought in words. I believe that we should conceive the actual case most truly, if we conceived this power of naming things and expressing their relations, as one laid up in the depths of man's being, one of the divine capacities with which he was created: but one (and in this differing from those which have produced in various people various arts of life), which could not remain dormant in him, for man could be only man through its exercise; which, therefore, did rapidly bud and blossom out from within him at every solicitation from the world without, or from his fellow man; as each object to be named appeared before his eyes, each relation of things to one another arose before his mind. It was not merely the possible, but the necessary, emanation of the spirit with which he had been endowed. Man makes his own language, but he makes it as the bee makes its cells, as the bird its nest.

How this latent power evolved itself first, how this spontaneous generation of language came to pass, is a mystery, even as every act of creation is of necessity such; and as a mystery

all the deepest inquirers into the subject are content to leave it. Yet we may perhaps a little help ourselves to the realizing of what the process was, and what it was not, if we liken it to the growth of a tree springing out of, and unfolding itself from, a root, and according to a necessary law—that root being the divine capacity of language with which man was created, that law being the law of highest reason with which he was endowed; if we liken it to this rather than to the rearing of a house, which a man should slowly and painfully fashion for himself with dead timbers combined after his own fancy and caprice; and which little by little improved in shape, material and size, being first but a log house, answering his barest needs, and only after centuries of toil and pain growing for his sons' sons into a stately palace for pleasure and delight.

Were it otherwise, were the savage the primitive man, we should then find savage tribes furnished, scantily enough, it might be, with the elements of speech, yet at the same time with its fruitful beginnings, its vigorous and healthful germs. But what does their language on close inspection prove? In every case what they are themselves, the remnant and ruin of a better and a nobler past. Fearful, indeed, is the impress of degradation which is stamped on the language of the savage, more fearful, perhaps, even than that which is

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stamped upon his form. When wholly letting go the truth, when long and greatly sinning against light and conscience, a people has thus gone the downward way, has been scattered off by some violent revolution from that portion of the world which is the seat of advance and progress, and driven to its remote isles and further corners, then as one nobler thought, one spiritual idea after another has perished from it, the words also that exprest these have perished, too. As one habit of civilization has been let go after another, the words which those habits demanded have dropt, first out of use, then out of memory, and thus after a while have been wholly lost.

Moffat, in his "Missionary Labors and Scenes in South Africa," gives us a very remarkable example of the disappearing of one of the most significant words from the language of a tribe sinking ever deeper in savagery; and with the disappearing of the word, of course, the disappearing as well of the great spiritual fact and truth whereof that word was at once the vehicle and the guardian. The Bechuanas, a Kafir tribe, employed formerly the word "Morimo" to designate "Him that is above," or "Him that is in heaven," and attached to the word the notion of a supreme divine being. This word, with the spiritual idea corresponding to it, Moffat found to have vanished from the language of the present generation, altho here and there he could

meet with an old man—scarcely one or two in a thousand—who remembered in his youth to have heard of “Morimo”; and this word, once so deeply significant, only survived now in the spells and charms of the so-called rain-makers and sorcerers, who misused it to designate a fabulous ghost, of whom they told the absurd-est and most contradictory things.

As there is no such witness to the degradation of the savage as the brutal poverty of his language, so is there nothing that so effectually tends to keep him in the depths to which he has fallen. You can not impart to any man more than the words which he understands either now contain, or can be made, intelligibly to him, to contain. Language is as truly on one side the limit and restraint of thought, as on the other side that which feeds and unfolds thought. Thus it is the ever-repeated complaint of the missionary that the very terms are well-nigh or wholly wanting in the dialect of the savage whereby to impart to him heavenly truths, or indeed even the nobler emotions of the human heart. Dobrizhoffer, the Jesuit missionary, in his curious “History of the Abipones,” tells us that neither these nor the Guarinies, two of the principal native tribes of Brazil, possess any word in the least corresponding to our “thanks.” But what wonder, if the feeling of gratitude was entirely absent from their hearts, that they should not have possessed the corresponding word in their vo-

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cabularies? Nay, how should they have had it there? And that this is the true explanation is plain from a fact which the same writer records, that altho inveterate askers, they never showed the slightest sense of obligation or of gratitude when they obtained what they sought; never saying more than, "This will be useful to me," or, "This is what I wanted." Dr. Krapf, after laborious researches in some widely extended dialects of East Africa, has remarked in them the same absence of any words expressing the idea of gratitude.

Nor is it only in what they have forfeited and lost, but also in what they have retained or invented, that these languages proclaim their degradation and debasement, and how deeply they and those that speak them have fallen. Thus, I have read of a tribe in New Holland which has no word to signify God, but has one to designate a process by which an unborn child may be destroyed in the bosom of its mother. And I have been informed, on the authority of one excellently capable of knowing, an English scholar long resident in Van Dieman's Land, that in the native language of that island there are four words to express the taking of human life—one to express a father's killing of a son, another a son's killing of a father, with other varieties of murder; and that in no one of these lies the slightest moral reprobation, or sense of the deep-lying distinction between to "kill" and

to "murder"; while at the same time, that language so richly and so fearfully provided with expressions for this extreme utterance of hate, he also reports that any word for "love" is wanting in it altogether.

Yet with all this, ever and anon in the midst of this wreck and ruin there is in the language of the savage some subtle distinction, some curious allusion to a perished civilization, now utterly unintelligible to the speaker; or some other note which proclaims his language to be the remains of a dissipated inheritance, the rags and remnants of a robe which was a royal one once. The fragments of a broken scepter are in his hand, a scepter wherewith once he held dominion (he, that is, in his progenitors) over large kingdoms of thought, which now have escaped wholly from his sway.

But while it is thus with him, while this is the downward course of all those that have chosen the downward path, while with every impoverishing and debasing of personal or national life there goes hand in hand a corresponding impoverishment and debasement of language, so, on the contrary, where there is advance and progress, where a divine idea is in any measure realizing itself in a people, where they are learning more accurately to define and distinguish, more truly to know, where they are ruling, as men ought to rule, over nature, and making her to give up her secrets to them, where new thoughts are ris-

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ing up over the horizon of a nation's mind, new feelings are stirring at a nation's heart, new facts coming within the sphere of its knowledge, there, will language be growing and advancing, too. It can not lag behind, for man feels that nothing is properly his own, that he has not secured any new thought, or entered upon any new spiritual inheritance, till he has fixt it in language, till he can contemplate it, not as himself, but as his word; he is conscious that he must express truth, if he is to preserve it, and still more if he would propagate it among others. "Names," as it has been excellently said, "are impressions of sense, and as such take the strongest hold upon the mind, and of all other impressions can be most easily recalled and retained in view. They therefore serve to give a point of attachment to all the more volatile objects of thought and feeling. Impressions that when past might be dissipated forever, are by their connection with language always within reach. Thoughts, of themselves are perpetually slipping out of the field of immediate mental vision; but the name abides with us, and the utterance of it restores them in a moment." And on the necessity of names for the propagation of the truth it has been well observed: "Hardly any original thoughts on mental or social subjects ever make their way among mankind, or assume their proper importance in the minds even of their inventors, until aptly selected words or

phrases have as it were nailed them down and held them fast."

Nor does what has here been said of the manner in which language enriches itself contradict a prior assertion that man starts with language as God's perfect gift, which he only impairs and forfeits by sloth and sin, according to the same law which holds good in respect of each other of the gifts of heaven. For it was not meant, as indeed was then observed, that men would possess words to set forth feelings which were not yet stirring in them, combinations which they had not yet made, objects which they had not yet seen, relations of which they were not yet conscious; but that up to his needs (those needs including not merely his animal wants, but all his higher spiritual cravings) he would find utterance freely. The great logical, or grammatical, framework of language (for grammar is the logic of speech, even as logic is the grammar of reason) he would possess, he knew not how; and certainly not as the final result of gradual acquisitions, but as that rather which alone had made those acquisitions possible; as that according to which he unconsciously worked, filling in this framework by degrees with these latter acquisitions of thought, feeling, and experience, as one by one they arrayed themselves in the garment and vesture of words.

Here, then, is the explanation of the fact that language should be thus instructive for

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us, that it should yield us so much, when we come to analyze and probe it; and yield us the more, the more deeply and accurately we do so. It is full of instruction because it is the embodiment, the incarnation, if I may so speak of the feelings and thoughts and experiences of a nation, yea, often of many nations, and of all which through long centuries they have attained to and won. It stands like the Pillars of Hercules, to mark how far the moral and intellectual conquests of mankind have advanced, only not like those pillars, fixt and immovable, but ever itself advancing with the progress of these. The mighty moral instincts which have been working in the popular mind have found therein their unconscious voice; and the single kinglier spirits that have looked deeper into the heart of things have oftentimes gathered up all they have seen into some one word, which they have launched upon the world, and with which they have enriched it forever—making in that new word a new region of thought to be henceforward in some sort the common heritage of all. Language is the amber in which a thousand precious and subtle thoughts have been safely embedded and preserved. It has arrested ten thousand lightning flashes of genius, which, unless thus fixt and arrested, might have been as bright, but would have also been as quickly passing and perishing, as the lightning. “Words convey the mental treasures of one period to the

generations that follow; and laden with this, their precious freight, they sail safely across gulfs of time in which empires have suffered shipwreck, and the languages of common life have sunk into oblivion." And for all these reasons far more and mightier in every way is a language than any one of the works which may have been composed in it. For that work, great as it may be, is but the embodying of the mind of a single man, this of a nation. The *Iliad* is great, yet not so great in strength or power or beauty as the Greek language. "*Paradise Lost*" is a noble possession for a people to have inherited, but the English tongue is a nobler heritage yet.

Great, then, will be our gains if, having these treasures of wisdom and knowledge lying round about us, so far more precious than mines of Californian gold, we determine that we will make what portion of them we can our own, that we will ask the words which we use to give an account of themselves, to say whence they are, and whither they tend. Then shall we often rub off the dust and rust from what seemed to us but a common token, which as such we had taken and given a thousand times, but which now we shall perceive to be a precious coin, bearing the "image and superscription" of the great King; then shall we often stand in surprize and in something of shame, while we behold the great spiritual realities which underlie our common speech,

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the marvelous truths which we have been witnessing *for* in our words, but, it may be, witnessing *against* in our lives.

It is, of course, our English tongue, out of which mainly we should seek to draw some of the hid treasures which it contains, from which we should endeavor to remove the veil which custom and familiarity have thrown over it. We can not employ ourselves better. There is nothing that will more help than will this to form an English heart in ourselves and in others. We could scarcely have a single lesson on the growth of our English tongue, we could scarcely follow up one of its significant words, without having unawares a lesson in English history as well, without not merely falling on some curious fact illustrative of our national life, but learning also how the great heart which is beating at the center of that life was gradually shaped and molded. We should thus grow, too, in our feeling of connection with the past, of gratitude and reverence to it; we should estimate more truly, and therefore more highly, what it has done for us, all that it has bequeathed to us, all that it has made ready to our hands. It was something for the children of Israel when they came into Canaan to enter upon wells which they digged not, and vineyards which they had not planted, and houses which they had not built; but how much greater a boon, how much more glorious a prerogative, for any one generation to enter

upon the inheritance of a language, which other generations, by their truth and toil, have made already a receptacle of choicest treasures, a storehouse of so much unconscious wisdom, a fit organ for expressing the subtlest distinctions, the tenderest sentiments, the largest thoughts, and the loftiest imaginations, which at any time the heart of men can conceive. And that those who have preceded us have gone far to accomplish this for us, I shall rejoice if I am able in any degree to make you feel in the talks which will follow the present.

SECOND TALK
THE MORALITY IN WORDS

SECOND TALK

THE MORALITY IN WORDS

Is man of a divine birth and stock, coming from God, and, when he fulfils the law and intention of his creation, returning to Him again? We need no more than his language to prove it. So much is there in that which could never have existed on any other supposition. How else could all those words which testify of his relation to God, and of his consciousness of this relation, and which ground themselves thereon, have found their way into this, the veritable transcript of his innermost life, the genuine utterance of the faith and hope which is in him? In no other way than this could we explain that great and preponderating weight thrown into the scale of goodness and truth, which, despite all in the other scale, we must needs acknowledge in every language to be there. How else shall we account for that sympathy with the right, that testimony against the wrong, which, despite all its aberrations and perversions, is yet its prevailing ground-tone?

But has man fallen, and deeply fallen, from the heights of his original creation? We need no more than his language to prove it. Like everything else about him, it bears at once the

stamp of his greatness and of his degradation, of his glory and of his shame. What dark and somber threads he must have woven into the tissue of his life, before we could trace those threads of an equal darkness which run through the tissue of his language! What facts of wickedness and wo must have existed in the first ere there could be such words to designate these as are found in the last! There have been always those who have sought to make light of the hurts which man has inflicted on himself, of the sickness with which he is sick; who would fain persuade themselves and others that moralists and divines, if they have not quite invented, have yet enormously exaggerated, these. But are these statements found only in Scripture and in sermons? Are there not mournful corroborations of their truth imprinted deeply upon every region of man's natural and spiritual life, and on none more deeply than on his language? It needs no more than to open a dictionary, and to cast our eye thoughtfully down a few columns, and we shall find abundant confirmation of this sadder and sterner estimate of man's moral and spiritual condition. How else shall we explain this long catalog of words, having all to do with sin, or with sorrow, or with both? How came they there? We may be quite sure that they were not invented without being needed, that they have each a correlative in the world of reali-

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ties. I open the first letter of the alphabet; what means this "ah," this "alas," these deep and long-drawn sighs of humanity, which at once encounter us there? And then presently follow words such as these, "affliction," "agony," "anguish," "assassin," "atheist," "avarice," and twenty more—words, you will observe, for the most part not laid up in the recesses of the language, to be drawn forth and used at rare opportunities, but occupying many of them its foremost ranks. And, indeed, as regards abundance, it is a melancholy thing to observe how much richer is every vocabulary in words that set forth sins than in those that set forth graces. When St. Paul (Gal. 5:19-23) would put these against those, "the works of the flesh" against "the fruit of the Spirit," those are seventeen, these only nine; and where do we find in Scripture such lists of graces as we do at 2 Tim. 3:2, Rom. 1:29-31, of their contraries?

Nor can I help taking note, in the oversight and muster from this point of view of the words which constitute a language, of the manner in which it has been put to all its resources that so it may express the infinite varieties, now of human suffering, now of human sin. Thus, what a fearful thing is it that any language should have a word expressive of the pleasure which men feel at the calamities of others; for the existence of the word bears testimony to the existence of the thing. And

yet in more than one such a word is found. Nor are there wanting, I suppose, in any language, words which are the mournful record of the strange wickednesses which the genius of man, so fertile in evil, has invented.

Our dictionaries, while they tell us much, yet will not tell us all. How shamefully rich is the language of the vulgar everywhere in words which are not allowed to find their way into books, yet which live as a sinful oral tradition on the lips of men to set forth that which is unholy and impure! And of these words, as no less of these which have to do with the kindred sins of reveling and excess, how many set the evil forth with an evident sympathy and approbation, as taking part with the sin against Him who has forbidden it under pain of His extremest displeasure. How much cleverness, how much wit, yea, how much imagination must have stood in the service of sin before it could possess a nomenclature so rich, so varied, and often so heaven-defying as it has.

How many words men have dragged downward with themselves, and made partakers more or less of their own fall! Having originally an honorable significance, they have yet with the deterioration and degeneration of those that used them, or those about whom they were used, deteriorated and degenerated, too. What a multitude of words originally harmless have assumed a harmful as their

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secondary meaning; how many worthy have acquired an unworthy. Thus, "knave" meant once no more than lad (nor does it now in German mean more); "villain" than peasant; a "boor" was only a farmer, a "varlet" was but a serving-man, a "menial" one of the "many" or household, a "churl" but a strong fellow, a "minion" a favorite; thus, man is "God's dearest *minion*." "Time-server" was used two hundred years ago quite as often for one in an honorable as in a dishonorable sense, "serving the time." "Conceits" had once nothing conceited in them; "officious" had reference to offices of kindness and not of busy meddling; "moody" was that which pertained to a man's mood, without any gloom or sullenness implied. "Demure" conveyed no hint, as it does now, of an overdoing of the outward demonstrations of modesty. In "crafty" and "cunning" there was nothing of crooked wisdom implied, but only knowledge and skill; "craft," indeed, still retains very often its more honorable use, a man's "craft" being his skill, and then the trade in which he is well skilled. And think you that the Magdalen could have ever given us "maudlin" in its present contemptuous application, if the tears of penitential weeping had been held in due honor in the world? "Tinsel," from the French "*étincelle*," meant once anything that sparkles or glistens; thus, "cloth of *tinsel*" would be cloth in-

wrought with silver and gold; but the sad experience that "all is not gold that glitters," that much which shows fair and specious to the eye is yet worthless in reality, has caused the word imperceptibly to assume the meaning which it now has, and when we speak of "tinsel," either literally or figuratively, we always mean now that which has no reality of sterling worth underlying the glittering and specious shows which it makes. "Tawdry," a word of curious derivation, which I will not pause to go into, has run through exactly the same course: it once conveyed no intimation of *mean* finery, or *shabby splendor*, as now it does. "Plausible" was once worthy of applause.

A like deterioration through use may be traced in the word "resent." It was not very long ago that Barrow could speak of the good man as a faithful "resenter" and requiter of benefits, of the duty of testifying an affectionate "resentment" of our obligations to God. But, alas! the memory of benefits fades and fails from us so much more quickly than that of injuries; that which we afterward remember and revolve in our minds is so much more predominantly the wrongs, real or imaginary, which men have done us, than the favors they have bestowed on us, that "to resent" in our modern English has come to be confined entirely to that deep reflective displeasure which men entertain against those that have done, or

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whom they believe to have done, them a wrong. This leads us to inquire how it comes to pass that we do not speak of the "retaliation" of benefits, as often as the "retaliation" of injuries? The word does but signify the again rendering as much as we have received; but this is so much seldomer thought of in regard of benefits than of wrongs that the word, tho not altogether unused in this its worthier sense, has yet a strange and somewhat unusual sound in our ears when so employed. Were we to speak of a man "retaliating" kindnesses, I am not sure that every one would understand us.

Neither is it altogether satisfactory to take note that "animosity," according to its derivation, means no more than "spiritedness"; that in the first use of the word in the later Latin to which it belongs, it was employed in this sense; was applied, for instance, to the spirit and fiery courage of the horse; nay, in English had once this meaning; but that now it is applied to only one kind of vigor and activity, that, namely, which is displayed in enmity and hate, and expresses a spiritedness in these. Does not this look too much as if these oftenest stirred men to a lively and vigorous activity?

Then what a mournful witness for the hard and unrighteous judgments we habitually form of one another lies in the word "prejudice." The word of itself means plainly no more than "a judgment formed beforehand,"

without affirming anything as to whether that judgment be favorably or unfavorable to the person about whom it is formed. Yet so predominantly do we form harsh, unfavorable judgments of others before knowledge and experience, that a "prejudice," or judgment before knowledge and not grounded on evidence, is almost always taken to signify an unfavorable anticipation about one; and "prejudicial" has actually acquired a secondary meaning of anything which is mischievous or injurious.

As these words are a testimony to the *sin* of man, so there is a signal testimony to his *infirmity*, to the limitation of human faculties and human knowledge, in the word to "retract." "To retract" means properly, as its derivation declares, no more than to handle over again, to reconsider. And yet so certain are we to find in a subject which we reconsider, or handle a second time, that which was at the first rashly, inaccurately stated, that which needs therefore to be amended, modified, withdrawn, that "to retract" could not tarry long with its primary meaning of reconsidering; and has come to signify, as we commonly use it, "to withdraw." Thus, the greatest father of the Latin Church, at the close of his life, wishing to amend whatever he might now perceive in his various published works to have been incautiously or incorrectly stated, gave to the book in which he carried

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out this intention (for they had then no such opportunities as second and third editions afford now), this very name of "Retractions," being literally "rehandlings," but, in fact, as any one turning to the work will at once perceive, withdrawals of various statements which he now considered to need thus to be withdrawn.

At the same time urging, as I have thus done, this degeneration of words, I should greatly err if I failed to bring before you the fact that a parallel process of purifying and ennobling has also been going forward, especially through the influences of a divine faith working in the world; which, as it has turned *men* from evil to good, or has lifted them from a lower earthly goodness to a higher, heavenly, so has it in like manner elevated, purified and ennobled a multitude of the words which they employ, until these, which once exprest only an earthly good, express now a heavenly. The Gospel of Christ, as it is the redemption of man, so is it in a multitude of instances the redemption of his word, freeing it from the bondage of corruption, that it should no longer be subject to vanity, nor stand any more in the service of sin or of the world, but in the service of God and of his truth. Thus, in the Greek language there is a word for "humility"; but this humility meant for the Greek—that is, with very rarest exceptions

—meanness of spirit. He who brought in the Christian grace of humility, did in so doing rescue also the word which exprest it for nobler uses and to a far higher dignity than hitherto it had attained. There were “angels” before heaven had been opened, but these only earthly messengers; “martyrs” also, or witnesses, but these not unto blood, nor yet for God’s highest truth; “apostles,” but sent of men; “evangels,” but not of the kingdom of heaven; “advocates,” but not “with the Father.” “Paradise” was a word common in slightly different forms to almost all the nations of the East; but they meant by it only some royal park or garden of delights; till for the Jew it was exalted to signify the wondrous abode for our first parents; and higher honors awaited it still, when on the lips of the Lord it signified the blissful waiting-place of faithful departed souls (Luke 23:43); yea, the heavenly blessedness itself. (Rev. 2:7). Nor was the word “regeneration” unknown to the Greeks: they could speak of the earth’s “regeneration” in the springtime, of recollection as the “regeneration” of knowledge; the Jewish historian could describe the return of his countrymen from the Babylonian captivity, and their reestablishment under Cyrus in their own land, as the word, on the lips of either Jew or Greek, was removed very far from that honor reserved for it in the Christian dispensation; namely, that it should

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be the bearer of one of the chiefest and most blest mysteries of the faith.

Let us now proceed to contemplate some of the attestations for God's truth, and then some of the playings into the hands of the devil's falsehood, which lurk in words. First, the witnesses to God's truth, the fallings in of our words with his unchangeable word; for these, as the true uses of the word, while the other are only its abuses, have a prior claim to be considered. Some modern "false prophets," who would gladly explain away all such phenomena of the world around us as declare man to be a sinful being and enduring the consequences of sin, tell us that pain is only a subordinate kind of pleasure, or, at worst, that it is a sort of needful hedge and guardian of pleasure. But there is a deeper feeling in the universal heart of man, bearing witness to something very different from this shallow explanation of the existence of pain in the present economy of the world; namely, that it is the correlative of sin, that it is *punishment*; and to this the word "pain" bears continual witness. Pain is punishment; so does the word itself, no less than the conscience of every one that is suffering it, declare. Just so, again, there are those who will not hear of great pestilences being God's scourges of men's sins; who fain would find out natural causes for them, and account for them by the help of these. I remember it was

thus with too many during both our fearful visitations from the cholera. They may do so, or imagine that they do so; yet every time they use the word "plague," they implicitly own the fact which they are endeavoring to deny; for "plague" means properly and according to its derivation, "blow," or "stroke"; and was a title given to these terrible diseases, because the great universal conscience of men, which is never at fault, believed and confest that these were "strokes," or "blows," inflicted by God on a guilty and rebellious world. With reference to such words so used we may truly say: *Vox populi, vox Dei*—a proverb which, shallowly interpreted, may be made to contain a most mischievous falsehood; but interpreted in the sense wherein no doubt it was spoken, holds a deepest truth. We must only remember that this "people" is not the populace wither in high place or in low; and that this "voice of the people" is not any momentary outcry, but the consenting testimony of the good and wise, of those neither brutalized by ignorance, nor corrupted by a false cultivation, in all places and in all times.

Every one who admits the truth which lies in this saying must, I think, acknowledge it as a remarkable fact, that men should have agreed to apply the word "miser," or miserable, to the man eminently addicted to the vice of covetousness, to him who loves his money with his whole heart and soul. Here,

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too, the moral instinct lying deep in all hearts has borne testimony to the tormenting nature of this vice, to the gnawing cares with which even here it punishes him that entertains it, to the enmity which there is between it and all joy; and the man who enslaves himself to his money is proclaimed in our very language to be a "miser," or a miserable man.

Other words will also be found to bear testimony to great moral truths. St. James has, I doubt not, been often charged with exaggeration, if not openly, yet in the hearts of men, perhaps we have sometimes been tempted to charge him with it ourselves, because he has said, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (2:10). And yet what says he different here from that which we are all agreed to say, which the Romans said long ago, they using the word "*integritas*," and we "*integrity*," to express the right moral condition for a man? For what was "*integritas*" before it was assumed into ethical use? It was entireness; the "*integrity*" of the body being, as Cicero explains it, the full possession and the perfect soundness of *all* the members of the body; and ethical "*integrity*," tho, of course, it can not be predicated so absolutely of any sinful child of Adam, is yet this same entireness or completeness transferred to the region of the higher moral life. It is exactly that condition which Herod had *not* attained, who

at the Baptist's bidding "did many things gladly" (Mark 6:20), but did not put away his brother's wife; and all whose partial obedience therefore profited him nothing; he had dropt one link in the golden chain of obedience, and it all fell to the ground.

How deep an insight into the failings of the human heart lies at the root of many words; and, if only we would attend to them, what valuable warnings many contain against subtle temptations and sins! Thus, all of us have probably more or less felt the temptation of seeking to please others by an unmanly assenting to their view of some matter, even when our own independent convictions would lead us to a different. The existence of such a temptation, and the fact that too many yield to it, are both declared in the Latin word for a flatterer—"assentator"—that is, "an assenter"; one who has not courage to say *No*, when a *Yes* is expected from him: and quite independently of the Latin, the German language, in its contemptuous and precisely equivalent use of "*Jaherr*," a "*yea-lord*," warns us in like manner against all such unmanly compliances.

Again, how well it is to have that spirit of depreciation of others, that eagerness to find spots and stains in the characters of the noblest and the best, who would otherwise oppress and rebuke us with a goodness and a greatness so far surpassing ours—met and

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checked by a word at once so expressive, and so little pleasant to take home to ourselves, as the French "dénigreur," a "blackener." This word also is now, I believe, out of use; which is a pity, the race it designates not yet being extinct. Full, too, of instruction and warning is our present employment of the word "libertine." It signified, according to its earliest use in French and in English, a speculative free-thinker in matters of religion and in the theory of morals, or, it might be, of government. But, as by a sure process of *free-thinking* does and will end in *free-acting*, as he who has cast off the one yoke will cast off the other, so a "libertine" came in two or three generations to signify a profligate, especially in relation to women, a licentious and debauched person.

There is much, too, that we may learn from looking a little closely at the word "passion." We sometimes think of the "passionate" man as a man of strong will, and of real though un-governed energy. But this word declares to us most plainly the contrary; for it, as a very solemn use of it declares, means properly "suffering"; and a passionate man is not a man doing something, but one suffering something to be done on him. When, then, a man or child is "in a passion," this is no coming out in him of a strong will, of a real energy, but rather the proof that for the time at least he has no will, no energy; he is suffering, not

doing, suffering his anger, or what other evil temper it may be, to lord over him without control. Let no one, then, think of "passion" as a sign of strength. As reasonably might one assume that it was a proof of a man being a strong man that he was often well beaten; such a fact would be evidence that a strong man was putting forth his strength on him, but of anything rather than that he himself was strong. The same sense of passion and feebleness going together, of the first being born of the second, lies, as I may remark by the way, in the twofold use of the Latin word, "impotens"; which, meaning first weak, means then violent, and then often weak and violent together.

Or meditate, I would ask you, on the use of the word "humanitas," to signify the mental and moral cultivation befitting a man, and consider how much herein is implied. We have happily overlived in England the time when it was still a question in debate among us, whether education were a good thing for every living soul or not; the only question which can be said seriously to divide Englishmen now being, in what manner that mental and moral training, which is society's debt to each one of its members, may be most effectually imparted to him. Were it not so, were there any who still affirmed that it was good for any man that he should be left with powers not called out and with faculties un-

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trained, we might appeal to this word "humanitas," and the use to which the Roman put it, in proof that he at least was not of this mind, even as now we may not slight the striking witness to the truth which this word contains. The Roman exprest by "humanitas" the highest and most harmonious culture of all the human faculties and powers. Then, and then only, man was truly man, when he received this; in so far as he did not receive this, his "humanity" was maimed and imperfect; he fell short of himself, of his ideal, of that which he was created to be; for so much was involved in this employment of the word. I may observe that in what has just been said lies the explanation of the term, the humanities, which, more in Scotland than here, is used to designate those studies which are considered the most specially adapted for training this the true humanity in every man.

In our use of the word "talents," as when we say "a man of talents" (not of "talent"; for that, as we shall see presently, is nonsense, tho "of *a* talent" would be allowable), there is a clear recognition of the responsibilities which go along with the possession of intellectual gifts and endowments, whatsoever they may be. We derive the word from the parable (Matt. 25:14), in which various talents, more and fewer, are committed to the several servants by their lord, that they may trade with

them in his absence, and give account of their employment at his return. Men may choose to forget the ends for which their "talents" were given them; they may count them merely something which they have got; they may turn them to selfish ends; they may glorify themselves in them, instead of glorifying the giver; they may practically deny that they were given at all; yet in this word, till they can rid their vocabulary of it, abides a continual memento that they were so given, or rather lent, and that each man shall have to render an account of their use.

Again, in the words "oblige" and "obligation," as when we speak of "being *obliged*," or of "having received an *obligation*," a moral truth is asserted; this, namely, that having received a benefit or a favor at the hands of another, it does not now lie in our free choice, but we morally *are bound* to show ourselves grateful for the same. We can not prove otherwise without denying not merely a moral truth, but one incorporated in the very language which we employ. Thus South, in a sermon "Of the Odious Sin of Ingratitude," has well asked, "If the conferring of a kindness did not *bind* the person upon whom it was conferred to the returns of gratitude, why, in the universal dialect of the world, are kindnesses still called *obligations*?"

Let us a little consider the word "kind." We speak of a "kind" person, and we speak

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of man—"kind," and perhaps, if we think about the matter at all, we seem to ourselves to be using quite different words, or the same word in senses quite unconnected. But they are connected, and that by closest bonds; a "kind" person is a "kinned" person, one of kin; one who acknowledges and acts upon his kinship with other men, confesses that he owes to them, as of one blood with himself, the debt of love. And so *mankind* is *mankinned*. In the word is contained a declaration of the relationship which exists between all the members of the human family; and seeing that this relationship in a race now scattered so widely and divided so far asunder can only be through a common head, we do, in fact, every time that we use the word "mankind," declare our faith in the one common descent of the whole race of man. And beautiful before, how much more beautiful now do the words "kind" and "kindness" appear, when we apprehend the root out of which they grow; that they are the acknowledgment in loving deeds of our kinship with our brethren; and how profitable to keep in mind that a lively recognition of the bonds of blood, whether of those closer ones which unite us to those whom by best right we term our family, or those wider ones which knit us to the whole human family, that this is the true source of all genuine love and affection; for so much is affirmed in our daily, hourly use of the word.

Why should the word "simple" be used slightly, and "simpleton" more slightly still? According to a derivation which I am not prepared to give up, the "simple" is one "without fold"; just what we may imagine Nathanael to have been, and what our Lord attributed as the highest honor to him, the "Israelite without guile"; and, indeed, what higher honor could there be than to have nothing double about us, to be without duplicities or folds? Even the world, that despises "simplicity," does not profess to approve of "duplicity," or double-foldedness. But inasmuch as we feel that in a world like ours such a man will make himself a prey, will prove no match for the fraud and falsehood which he will everywhere encounter, and as there is that in most men which, were they obliged to choose between deceiving and being deceived, would make them choose the former, it has come to pass that "simple," which in a world of righteousness would be a word of highest honor, implies here in this world of ours something of scorn for the person to whom it is applied. And must it not be confessed to be a striking fact that exactly in the same way a person of deficient intellect is called an "innocent," in nocens, one that does not hurt? So that this word assumes that the first and chief use men make of their intellectual powers will be to do hurt, that where they are wise, it will be to do evil.

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What a witness does human language bear here against human sin!

Nor are these isolated examples of the contemptuous application of words expressive of goodness. They meet us on every side. Thus "silly," written "seely" in our earlier English, is beyond a doubt the German "selig," which means "blest." We see the word in its transition state in our early poets, with whom "silly" is so often an affectionate epithet applied to sheep, as expressive of their harmlessness and innocency. With a still slighter departure from its original meaning, an early English poet applies the word to the Lord of Glory himself, while yet an infant of days, styling Him "this harmless, *silly* babe." But here the same process went forward as with the words "simple" and "innocent." And the same moral phenomenon repeats itself continually. For example: at the first promulgation of the Christian faith, and while yet the name of its divine founder was somewhat new and strange to the ears of the heathen, they were wont, some perhaps out of ignorance, but more of intention, slightly to mispronounce this name, as tho it has not been "Christus," but "Chrestus"—that word signifying in Greek, "benevolent," or "benign." That they who did this of intention meant no honor hereby to the Lord of Life, but the contrary, is certain; and indeed the word, like the "silly," "innocent," "simple," of which

we have already spoken, had already contracted a slight tinge of contempt, or else there would have been no inducement to fasten it on the Savior. What a strange shifting of the moral sense there must have been before it could have done so, before men could have found in a name implying benignity and goodness a nickname of scorn.

We all know how prone men are to ascribe to chance those blessings which come directly from God—to build altars to fortune rather than to Him who is the author of every good thing. And this faith of theirs, that their blessings, even their highest, come to them by a blind chance, they have incorporated in a word; for “happy” and “happiness” are, of course, connected with and derived from “hap,” which is chance. But how unworthy is this word to express any true felicity, of which the very essence is that it excludes hap or chance, that the world neither gave nor can take it away. It is, indeed, *more* objectionable than “lucky” and “fortunate,” objectionable as also are these, inasmuch as by the “happy” man we mean much more than by the “fortunate.” Very nobly has a great English poet protested against misuse of the latter word, when of one who had lost all else but kept the truth, he exclaims:

“Call not the royal Swede *unfortunate*,
Who never did to *fortune* bend the knee.”

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There are other words which reveal a wrong or insufficient aspect which men take of their duties—or which at all events others have taken before them; for it is possible that the mischief may have been done long ago, and the present users of the words may only have inherited it from others, not helped to bring it about themselves. Thus, when an employer of labor advertises that he wants so many “hands,” we must needs feel that this language could never have become current, a man could never have thus shrunk into a “hand” in the eyes of his fellow men unless this latter had in good part forgotten that annexed to those hands which he would purchase to toil for him were also heads and hearts.

But another way in which the immorality of words mainly displays itself—one, too, in which perhaps they work their greatest mischief—is that of giving honorable names to dishonorable things, making sin plausible by dressing it out sometimes even in the very color of goodness, or if not so, yet in such as go far to conceal its own native deformity. “The tongue,” as St. James has declared, “is *a world of iniquity*” (3:6); or, as some interpreters affirm, the words ought rather to be translated, and they would be then still more to our purpose, “*the ornament of iniquity*,” that which sets it out in fair and attractive colors; and those who understand the original will at once perceive that such a

meaning may possibly lie in the words. I do not believe that these last-named expositors are right, yet certainly the connection of the Greek word for "tongue" with our "gloze," "glossy," with the German "gleissen," to smooth over or polish, and with an obsolete Greek word as well, also signifying "to polish," is not accidental, but real, and may well suggest some searching thoughts as to the uses whereunto we turn this "*best*," but, as it may therefore prove also, this *worst*, "member that we have."

How much wholesomer on all accounts is it that there should be an ugly word for an ugly thing, one involving moral condemnation and disgust, even at the expense of a little coarseness, rather than one which plays fast and loose with the eternal principles of morality, which makes sin plausible, and shifts the divinely reared landmarks of right and wrong, thus bringing the user under the wo of them, "that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isai. 5:20)—a text on which South has written four of his grandest sermons, with reference to this very matter, and bearing this striking title, "On the Fatal Imposture and Force of Words." How awful, yea, how fearful, is the force and imposture of theirs, leading men captive at will. There is an atmosphere about them which they

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“churl”; or if his Norman master has a name for him, it is one which on his lips becomes more and more a title of opprobrium and contempt, the “villain.” The instruments used in cultivating the earth, the flail, the plow, the sickle, the spade, are express in his language; so, too, the main products of the earth, as wheat, rye, oats, bere; and no less the names of domestic animals. Concerning these last it is curious to observe (and it may be remembered that Wamba, the Saxon jester in “Ivanhoe,” plays the philologer here), that the names of almost all animals, so long as they are alive, are thus Saxon, but when drest and prepared for food become Norman—a fact, indeed, which we might have expected beforehand; for the Saxon hind had the charge and labor of tending and feeding them, but only that they might appear on the table of his Norman lord. Thus, “ox,” “steer,” “cow” are Saxon, but “beef” Norman; “calf” is Saxon, but “veal” Norman; “sheep” is Saxon, but “mutton” Norman; so it is severally with “swine” and “pork,” “deer” and “venison,” “fowl” and “pullet.” “Bacon,” the only flesh which, perhaps, ever came within his reach, is the single exception.

Putting all this together, with much more of the same kind, which might be produced, but has only been indicated here, we should certainly gather, that while there are mani-

fest tokens as preserved in our language, of the Saxon having been for a season an inferior and even an oppressed race, the stable elements of Anglo-Saxon life, however overlaid for a while, had still made good their claim to be the solid groundwork of the after nation as of the after language; and to the justice of this conclusion all other historic records, and the present social condition of England, consent in bearing testimony.

What I have here supposed might be done in the way of reproducing the past history of England had all records of her earlier times and of the great social changes of those times been entirely swept away; this has been done for the earlier history of Italy, of which the written memorials *have* perished, by the great modern historian of Rome. He draws most important conclusions respecting the races which occupied the Italian soil, and the relations in which they stood to one another, from an analysis of the words which in the Latin language are derived severally from a Greek and from other sources. "It can not," he says, "be mere chance that the words for house, field, plow, plowing, wine, oil, milk, kine, swine, and others relating to tillage and gentler ways of life agree in Latin and in Greek, while all objects appertaining to war or the chase are designated by words utterly ungreecian." From this he draws the

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conclusion that this ungreician population which has bequeathed these latter words, stood toward the Grecian very much in the same relation which we have seen the Norman, as declared by the consenting witness of history and language, to have occupied in respect of the Saxon.

Thus far our lesson has been derived from a noting of the relative proportions in which the words of one stock and of another are mingled in a language, with the domains of human activity to which these severally appertain. But this is not all; there are vast harvests of historic lore garnered often in single words; there are continually great facts of history which they at once declare and preserve. When Aristotle was investigating the rise of the Greek theater, and determining whether in its early rudiments it belonged to the Ionian or Dorian branch of the great Hellenic family, the words "comedy" and "drama" were sufficient to settle the question for him. For into the first a substantive enters, and the second rests on a verb, which are only in Dorian use; while he could at once point out the words which would inevitably have been employed had the origin of the Greek theater been Attic or Ionian. Here the words told him something which he could never have learned in any other way. There were no written records or oral traditions which could

have decided the question, but "comedy" and "drama" were themselves a record and a tradition, and the most decisive of all. The history which survived nowhere else survived in them; and in all languages there are multitudinous records preserved in the same way, many of which would otherwise have been forever lost.

There is a little word not in uncommon use among us, an inquiry into the pedigree of which will lay open to us an important page in the intellectual history of Europe. We may all know what a "dunce" is, but we may not be as well acquainted with the quarter whence the word has been derived. Certain theologians in the middle ages were termed Schoolmen; being so called because they were formed in the cloister and cathedral *schools* which Charlemagne and his immediate successors had founded—men not to be lightly spoken of, as they often are by those who never read a line of their works, and have not a tithe of their wit; who, moreover, little guess how many of the most familiar words which they employ, or misemploy, have descended to them from these. "Real," "virtual," "entity," "nonentity," "equivocation," all these, with many more unknown to classical Latin, but which now have become almost necessities, were first coined by the Schoolmen; and, passing over from them into the speech of those more or

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less interested in their speculations, have gradually filtered through the successive strata of society, till now they have reached, some of them, to quite the lowest. At the revival of learning, however, their works fell out of favor; they were not written in classical Latin; the form in which their speculations were thrown was often unattractive; it was mainly in their authority that the Catholic Church found support for its periled dogmas; on all which accounts it was considered a mark of intellectual progress and advance to have broken with them and altogether thrown off their yoke. Some, however, still clung to these Schoolmen, and to one in particular, *Duns* Scotus, the great teacher of the Franciscan order; and many times an adherent of the old learning would seek to strengthen his position by an appeal to its great doctor, familiarly called *Duns*; while the others would contemptuously rejoin, "Oh, you are a *Dunsman*," or more briefly, "You are a *Duns*," or, "This is a piece of *dunsery*"; and inasmuch as the new learning was ever enlisting more and more of the genius and scholarship of the age on its side, the title became more and more a term of scorn; "Remember ye not," says Tyndall, "how within this thirty years and far less, the old barking curs, *Dunce's* disciples, and like draff called Scotists, the children of darkness, raged in every pulpit against Greek, Latin, and He-

brew?" And thus from that long extinct conflict between the old and the new learning, that strife between the medieval and the modern theology, we inherit the words "dunce," and "duncery." Let us pause here for a moment to confess that the lot of poor Duns was certainly a hard one, who, whatever may have been his merits as a teacher of Christian truth, was certainly one of the keenest and most subtle-witted of men. He, the "subtle Doctor," by preeminence, for so his admirers called him, "the wittiest of the school divines," as Hooker declares him, could hardly have anticipated, and as little as any man deserved, that his name should be turned into a byword expressive of stupidity and obstinate dulness.

This, however, is only one example of the curious fortune of words. We have another singular example of the same, and of a parallel injustice, in the way in which the word "mammetry," which is a contradiction of "Mahometry," is employed by our early English writers. Mahometanism being the most prominent form of false religion with which Englishmen were acquainted, this word was used up to and beyond the Reformation, to designate first any false religion, and then the worship of idols; idolatry being proper to, and a leading feature of, most false religions. Men did not pause to remember that Mahometanism is the great exception, its most

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characteristic feature and glory being its protest against all idol-worship whatsoever; which being so, the injustice was signal in calling an idol "a mammet," or a Mahomet, and idolatry "mammetry." To pursue the fortunes of the word a little further, another step caused not religious images only, but dolls, to be called "mammets"; and when in "Romeo and Juliet" Capulet contemptuously styles his daughter "a whining mammet," the process is strange, yet every step of it may be easily followed, whereby the name of the Arabian false prophet is fastened on the fair maiden of Verona.

"Bigot" is another word widely spread over Europe, of which I am inclined to think that we should look for the derivation where it is not generally sought, and that for this we must turn to Spain. It has much perplexed inquirers, and two explanations of it are current; one of which traces it up to the early Normans, while they yet retained their northern tongue, and to their often adjuration by the name of God, with sometimes a reference to a famous scene in French history in which Rollo, Duke of Normandy, played a conspicuous part; the other puts it in connection with "Beguines," called often in Latin "Beguttae," a name by which certain communities of pieties women were known in the middle ages. These last have left us their name in "biggen," a plain cap so called

because originally worn by them; yet I can not persuade myself that we owe "bigot" either to them or to the Normans, but rather to that mighty impression which the Spaniards made upon all Europe in the fifteenth and following century. Now the word "bigote" means in Spanish "mustachio"; and as contrasted with the smooth or nearly smooth upper lip of most other people, at that time the Spaniards were the "men of the mustachio." That it was their characteristic feature comes out in Shakespeare's "Love's Labor's Lost," where Armado, the "fantastical Spaniard," describes the king "his familiar, as sometimes being pleased to lean on his poor shoulder, and dally with his mustachio." That they themselves connected firmness and resolution with the mustachio, that it was esteemed the outward symbol of these, is plain from such phrases as "hombre de bigote," a man of resolution, "tener bigotes," to stand firm. But that in which they eminently displayed their firmness and resolution in those days was their adherence to whatever the Roman See imposed and taught. What then more natural, or more entirely according to the law of the generation of names, than that this striking and distinguishing outward feature of the Spaniard should have been laid hold of to express that character and condition of mind which eminently were his, and then transferred to all

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others who shared the same? The mustachio is in like manner in France a symbol of military courage; and thus "un vieux mustache" is an old soldier of courage and military bearing. And strengthening this view, the earliest use of the word which Richardson gives, is a passage from Bishop Hall, where "bigot" is used to signify a pervert to Romanism: "He was turned both *bigot* and physician." In further proof that the Spaniard was in those times the standing representative of the bigot and the persecutor, we need but turn to the older editions of Fox's "Book of Martyrs," where the pagan persecutors of the early Christians were usually arrayed in the armor of Spanish soldiers, and sometimes graced with tremendous "bigotes."

I can have no fitter opportunity or urging upon you the importance of seeking in every case to acquaint yourselves with the circumstances under which any body of men that have played an important part in history, especially in the history of your own land, obtained the name by which they were afterward willing to be known, or which was used for their designation by others. This you may do as a matter of historical inquiry, and keeping entirely aloof in spirit from the scorn, the bitterness, the falsehood, the calumny, out of which very often this name was first imposed. Whatever of this evil may have been at work in them that coined, or gave currency

to, the name, the name itself can never without serious loss be neglected by those who would truly understand the moral significance of the thing; there is always something, often very much, to be learned from it. Learn then in regard of each one of these names which you may meet in your studies, whether it was one which men gave to themselves; or one imposed on them by others, and which they never recognized; or one which being first imposed by others, was yet in course of time admitted and accepted by themselves. We have examples in all these kinds. Thus, the "Gnostics" called *themselves* such; the name was of their own devising, and one in which they boasted: in like manner the "Cavaliers" of our Civil War. "Quaker," "Puritan," "Roundhead," were all, on the contrary, names devised by others, and never accepted by those to whom they were attached; while "Whig" and "Tory" were nicknames originally of bitterest scorn and party hate, given by two political bodies in England to one another, which, however, in course of years lost what was offensive in them, until they came to be accepted and employed by the very parties themselves. The same we may say of "Methodists"; it was certainly not first taken by the followers of Wesley, but imposed on them by others, while yet they have been subsequently willing to accept and to be known by it. "Capuchin" was in like man-

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ner a jesting name, first given by the boys in the streets to that branch of the Franciscans, who afterward accepted the name as their proper designation. It was suggested by the peaked and pointed hood (*capucho*) which they wore.

Now of these titles, and of many more that might be adduced, some undoubtedly, like the last, had their rise in mere external accident, and stand in no essential connection with those that bear them; and these names, altho seldom without their instruction, yet plainly are not so instructive as others, in which the innermost heart of a system speaks out and reveals itself, so that, having mastered the name, we have placed ourselves at the central point, from which we shall best master everything besides. Thus, for instance, is it with "Gnosticism" and "Gnostic"; in the prominence given to *gnosis*, or knowledge, as opposed to faith, lies the key to the whole system. And I may say generally that almost all the sects and parties, religious and political, which have risen up in times past in England, are known by names that will repay study; by names, to understand which will bring us far to an understanding of their strength and their weakness, their truth and their error, the idea and intention according to which they wrought. "Puritans," "Fifth Monarchy Men," "Seekers," "Independents," "Friends," "Latitu-

dinarians," these titles, with many more, have each its significance; and would you understand what the men themselves meant, you must first understand what they were called. From this must be your point of starting, even as to this you must bring back whatever further information you may gain; and, tho I will not say that you must always subordinate it to the name, yet must you ever put it in relation and connection with that.

You will often be able to glean knowledge from the names of things, if not as important as that I have just been speaking of, yet curious and interesting. What a record of inventions is preserved in the names which so many articles bear, of the place from which they first came, or the person by whom they were first invented. The "magnet" has its name from Magnesia; the "bayonet" tells us that it was first made at Bayonne; "cambrics," that they came from Cambray; "damask" from Damascus (the "damson," also, is the "damascene," or Damascus, plum); "arras," from Arras; "dimity," from Damietta; "cordwain," or "cordovan," from Cordova; "currants," from Corinth; "indigo" (indicum), from India; the "bezant," so often named in our early literature, from Byzantium, being a Byzantine coin; the "guinea," that it was originally coined (in 1663) of gold brought from the African coast

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so called; "camlet," that it was woven, at least in part, of camel's hair. Such has been the manufacturing progress of England that we now send our calicoes and muslins to India and the East; yet the words give standing witness that we once imported them; for "calico" is from Calicut, and "muslin" from Moussul, a city in Asiatic Turkey. "Ermine" is the spoil of the Armenian rat; the "pheasant" came to us from the banks of the Phasis; the "cherry" was brought by Lucullus from Cerasus, a city in Pontus; the "peach" declares itself by its name to be a Persian fruit.

It is true, indeed, that occasionally a name will embody and give permanence to an error; as when in "America" the honor of discovering the New World, which belonged to Columbus, has been transferred to another eminent discoverer, but one who had no title to this praise, and who, as has been lately abundantly shown, was entirely guiltless of any attempt to usurp it for himself. So, too, the "turkey" in our farmyards seems to claim Turkey for its home; and the assumption that it was from there no doubt caused it to be so called; while, indeed, it was unknown in Europe until introduced from the New World, where alone it is indigenous. This error the French in another shape repeat, calling it "dinde," originally "poulet *d'Inde*," or Indian fowl. In like manner "gipsies" ap-

pears to imply that Egypt was the country to which these wanderers originally belonged, and from which they had migrated westward; and certainly it was so believed in many parts of Europe at their first appearance in the beginning of the fifteenth century, and hence this title. It is now, however, clearly made out, their language leaving no doubt of the fact, that they are an outcast tribe, which has wandered hither from a more distant land, from India itself. "Bohemians," the French appellation of gipsies, involves an error similar to ours: they were taken at first by the common people in France to be the expelled Hussites of Bohemia, and hence this name. In the German "Zigeuner" there is no expression of the land from which they were presumed to have come, but if this word be "Zieh-Gauner," that is, "roaming thieves," it will indicate the evil repute in which from the very beginning they were held.

And where words have not, as in these cases, embodied an error, it will yet sometimes happen that the sound or spelling of a word will *to us* possibly suggest a wrong explanation, against which in these studies it will need to be on our guard. I dare say that there has been a stage in most boys' geographical knowledge, when they have taken for granted that Jutland was so called, not because it was the land of the Jutes, but on account of its *jutting* out into the sea in so remarkable a man-

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ner. And there have not been wanting those who have ventured to trace in the name "Jove" a heathen reminiscence of the awful name of Jehovah. I will not enter into this here; sufficient to say that, however specious this at first sight may seem, yet on closer examination of the two words, every connection between them disappears.

It is a signal evidence of the conservative powers of language, that we may oftentimes trace in speech the records of customs and states of society which have now past so entirely away as to survive nowhere else but in these words alone. For example, a "stipulation," or agreement, is so called, as many tell us, from "stipula," a straw, because it once was usual, when one person passed over landed property to another, that a straw from the land, as a pledge or earnest of the property transferred, should be handed from the seller to the buyer, which afterward was commonly preserved with, or inserted in, the title deeds. And we all know how important a fact of English history is laid up in "curfew" or "couvre-feu." The "limner," or "lumineur" (luminatore), brings us back to a period when the *illumination* of manuscripts was the leading occupation of the painter; so that from this work he derived his name. "Thrall" and "thralldom" descend to us from a period when it was the custom to *thrill* or drill the ear of a slave in token of

servitude; a custom in use among the Jews, (Deut. 15:17), and retained by our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, who were wont thus to pierce at the church-door the ears of their bond-servants. By "lumber," we are, or might be, taught that Lombards were the first pawnbrokers, even as they were the first bankers, in England; a "lumber"-room being a "lombard"-room, or room where the pawnbroker stored his pledges. Nor need I do more than remind you that in our common phrase of "*signing* our name" we preserve a record of a time when the first rudiments of education, such as the power of writing, were the portion of so few, that it was not as now the exception, but the custom for most persons to make their mark or "sign"; great barons and kings themselves not being ashamed to set this *sign* or cross to the weightiest documents. We more accurately express what now we do, when we speak of "subscribing the name."

We have abundant right then to speak of a history in words. Now suppose that the pieces of money which in the ordinary intercourse of life are passing through our hands, had each one something of its own which made it more or less worthy of note; if on one was stamped some striking maxim, on another some important fact, on a third a memorable date; if others were works of finest art, graven with rare and beautiful

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less interested in their speculations, have gradually filtered through the successive strata of society, till now they have reached, some of them, to quite the lowest. At the revival of learning, however, their works fell out of favor; they were not written in classical Latin; the form in which their speculations were thrown was often unattractive; it was mainly in their authority that the Catholic Church found support for its periled dogmas; on all which accounts it was considered a mark of intellectual progress and advance to have broken with them and altogether thrown off their yoke. Some, however, still clung to these Schoolmen, and to one in particular, *Duns* Scotus, the great teacher of the Franciscan order; and many times an adherent of the old learning would seek to strengthen his position by an appeal to its great doctor, familiarly called *Duns*; while the others would contemptuously rejoin, "Oh, you are a *Duns-man*," or more briefly, "You are a *Duns*," or, "This is a piece of *dunsery*"; and inasmuch as the new learning was ever enlisting more and more of the genius and scholarship of the age on its side, the title became more and more a term of scorn; "Remember ye not," says Tyndall, "how within this thirty years and far less, the old barking curs, *Dunce's* disciples, and like draff called Scotists, the children of darkness, raged in every pulpit against Greek, Latin, and He-

brew?" And thus from that long extinct conflict between the old and the new learning, that strife between the medieval and the modern theology, we inherit the words "dunce," and "duncery." Let us pause here for a moment to confess that the lot of poor Duns was certainly a hard one, who, whatever may have been his merits as a teacher of Christian truth, was certainly one of the keenest and most subtle-witted of men. He, the "subtle Doctor," by preeminence, for so his admirers called him, "the wittiest of the school divines," as Hooker declares him, could hardly have anticipated, and as little as any man deserved, that his name should be turned into a byword expressive of stupidity and obstinate dulness.

This, however, is only one example of the curious fortune of words. We have another singular example of the same, and of a parallel injustice, in the way in which the word "mammetry," which is a contradiction of "Mahometry," is employed by our early English writers. Mahometanism being the most prominent form of false religion with which Englishmen were acquainted, this word was used up to and beyond the Reformation, to designate first any false religion, and then the worship of idols; idolatry being proper to, and a leading feature of, most false religions. Men did not pause to remember that Mahometanism is the great exception, its most

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characteristic feature and glory being its protest against all idol-worship whatsoever; which being so, the injustice was signal in calling an idol "a mammet," or a Mahomet, and idolatry "mammetry." To pursue the fortunes of the word a little further, another step caused not religious images only, but dolls, to be called "mammets"; and when in "Romeo and Juliet" Capulet contemptuously styles his daughter "a whining mammet," the process is strange, yet every step of it may be easily followed, whereby the name of the Arabian false prophet is fastened on the fair maiden of Verona.

"Bigot" is another word widely spread over Europe, of which I am inclined to think that we should look for the derivation where it is not generally sought, and that for this we must turn to Spain. It has much perplexed inquirers, and two explanations of it are current; one of which traces it up to the early Normans, while they yet retained their northern tongue, and to their often adjuration by the name of God, with sometimes a reference to a famous scene in French history in which Rollo, Duke of Normandy, played a conspicuous part; the other puts it in connection with "Beguines," called often in Latin "Beguttæ," a name by which certain communities of pieties women were known in the middle ages. These last have left us their name in "biggen," a plain cap so called

because originally worn by them; yet I can not persuade myself that we owe "bigot" either to them or to the Normans, but rather to that mighty impression which the Spaniards made upon all Europe in the fifteenth and following century. Now the word "bigote" means in Spanish "mustachio"; and as contrasted with the smooth or nearly smooth upper lip of most other people, at that time the Spaniards were the "men of the mustachio." That it was their characteristic feature comes out in Shakespeare's "Love's Labor's Lost," where Armado, the "fantastical Spaniard," describes the king "his familiar, as sometimes being pleased to lean on his poor shoulder, and dally with his mustachio." That they themselves connected firmness and resolution with the mustachio, that it was esteemed the outward symbol of these, is plain from such phrases as "hombre de bigote," a man of resolution, "tener bigotes," to stand firm. But that in which they eminently displayed their firmness and resolution in those days was their adherence to whatever the Roman See imposed and taught. What then more natural, or more entirely according to the law of the generation of names, than that this striking and distinguishing outward feature of the Spaniard should have been laid hold of to express that character and condition of mind which eminently were his, and then transferred to all

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others who shared the same? The mustachio is in like manner in France a symbol of military courage; and thus "un vieux mustache" is an old soldier of courage and military bearing. And strengthening this view, the earliest use of the word which Richardson gives, is a passage from Bishop Hall, where "bigot" is used to signify a pervert to Romanism: "He was turned both *bigot* and physician." In further proof that the Spaniard was in those times the standing representative of the bigot and the persecutor, we need but turn to the older editions of Fox's "Book of Martyrs," where the pagan persecutors of the early Christians were usually arrayed in the armor of Spanish soldiers, and sometimes graced with tremendous "bigotes."

I can have no fitter opportunity or urging upon you the importance of seeking in every case to acquaint yourselves with the circumstances under which any body of men that have played an important part in history, especially in the history of your own land, obtained the name by which they were afterward willing to be known, or which was used for their designation by others. This you may do as a matter of historical inquiry, and keeping entirely aloof in spirit from the scorn, the bitterness, the falsehood, the calumny, out of which very often this name was first imposed. Whatever of this evil may have been at work in them that coined, or gave currency

to, the name, the name itself can never without serious loss be neglected by those who would truly understand the moral significance of the thing; there is always something, often very much, to be learned from it. Learn then in regard of each one of these names which you may meet in your studies, whether it was one which men gave to themselves; or one imposed on them by others, and which they never recognized; or one which being first imposed by others, was yet in course of time admitted and accepted by themselves. We have examples in all these kinds. Thus, the "Gnostics" called *themselves* such; the name was of their own devising, and one in which they boasted: in like manner the "Cavaliers" of our Civil War. "Quaker," "Puritan," "Roundhead," were all, on the contrary, names devised by others, and never accepted by those to whom they were attached; while "Whig" and "Tory" were nicknames originally of bitterest scorn and party hate, given by two political bodies in England to one another, which, however, in course of years lost what was offensive in them, until they came to be accepted and employed by the very parties themselves. The same we may say of "Methodists"; it was certainly not first taken by the followers of Wesley, but imposed on them by others, while yet they have been subsequently willing to accept and to be known by it. "Capuchin" was in like man-

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ner a jesting name, first given by the boys in the streets to that branch of the Franciscans, who afterward accepted the name as their proper designation. It was suggested by the peaked and pointed hood (*capucho*) which they wore.

Now of these titles, and of many more that might be adduced, some undoubtedly, like the last, had their rise in mere external accident, and stand in no essential connection with those that bear them; and these names, altho seldom without their instruction, yet plainly are not so instructive as others, in which the innermost heart of a system speaks out and reveals itself, so that, having mastered the name, we have placed ourselves at the central point, from which we shall best master everything besides. Thus, for instance, is it with "Gnosticism" and "Gnostic"; in the prominence given to *gnosis*, or knowledge, as opposed to faith, lies the key to the whole system. And I may say generally that almost all the sects and parties, religious and political, which have risen up in times past in England, are known by names that will repay study; by names, to understand which will bring us far to an understanding of their strength and their weakness, their truth and their error, the idea and intention according to which they wrought. "Puritans," "Fifth Monarchy Men," "Seekers," "Independents," "Friends," "Latitu-

dinarians," these titles, with many more, have each its significance; and would you understand what the men themselves meant, you must first understand what they were called. From this must be your point of starting, even as to this you must bring back whatever further information you may gain; and, tho I will not say that you must always subordinate it to the name, yet must you ever put it in relation and connection with that.

You will often be able to glean knowledge from the names of things, if not as important as that I have just been speaking of, yet curious and interesting. What a record of inventions is preserved in the names which so many articles bear, of the place from which they first came, or the person by whom they were first invented. The "magnet" has its name from Magnesia; the "bayonet" tells us that it was first made at Bayonne; "cambrics," that they came from Cambray; "damask" from Damascus (the "damson," also, is the "damascene," or Damascus, plum); "arras," from Arras; "dimity," from Dami-etta; "cordwain," or "cordovan," from Cordova; "currants," from Corinth; "indigo" (indicum), from India; the "bezant," so often named in our early literature, from Byzantium, being a Byzantine coin; the "guinea," that it was originally coined (in 1663) of gold brought from the African coast

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so called; "camlet," that it was woven, at least in part, of camel's hair. Such has been the manufacturing progress of England that we now send our calicoes and muslins to India and the East; yet the words give standing witness that we once imported them; for "calico" is from Calicut, and "muslin" from Moussul, a city in Asiatic Turkey. "Ermine" is the spoil of the Armenian rat; the "pheasant" came to us from the banks of the Phasis; the "cherry" was brought by Lucullus from Cerasus, a city in Pontus; the "peach" declares itself by its name to be a Persian fruit.

It is true, indeed, that occasionally a name will embody and give permanence to an error; as when in "America" the honor of discovering the New World, which belonged to Columbus, has been transferred to another eminent discoverer, but one who had no title to this praise, and who, as has been lately abundantly shown, was entirely guiltless of any attempt to usurp it for himself. So, too, the "turkey" in our farmyards seems to claim Turkey for its home; and the assumption that it was from there no doubt caused it to be so called; while, indeed, it was unknown in Europe until introduced from the New World, where alone it is indigenous. This error the French in another shape repeat, calling it "dinde," originally "*poulet d'Inde*," or Indian fowl. In like manner "gipsies" ap-

pears to imply that Egypt was the country to which these wanderers originally belonged, and from which they had migrated westward; and certainly it was so believed in many parts of Europe at their first appearance in the beginning of the fifteenth century, and hence this title. It is now, however, clearly made out, their language leaving no doubt of the fact, that they are an outcast tribe, which has wandered hither from a more distant land, from India itself. "Bohemians," the French appellation of gipsies, involves an error similar to ours: they were taken at first by the common people in France to be the expelled Hussites of Bohemia, and hence this name. In the German "Zigeuner" there is no expression of the land from which they were presumed to have come, but if this word be "Zieh-Gauner," that is, "roaming thieves," it will indicate the evil repute in which from the very beginning they were held.

And where words have not, as in these cases, embodied an error, it will yet sometimes happen that the sound or spelling of a word will *to us* possibly suggest a wrong explanation, against which in these studies it will need to be on our guard. I dare say that there has been a stage in most boys' geographical knowledge, when they have taken for granted that Jutland was so called, not because it was the land of the Jutes, but on account of its *jutting* out into the sea in so remarkable a man-

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ner. And there have not been wanting those who have ventured to trace in the name "Jove" a heathen reminiscence of the awful name of Jehovah. I will not enter into this here; sufficient to say that, however specious this at first sight may seem, yet on closer examination of the two words, every connection between them disappears.

It is a signal evidence of the conservative powers of language, that we may oftentimes trace in speech the records of customs and states of society which have now past so entirely away as to survive nowhere else but in these words alone. For example, a "stipulation," or agreement, is so called, as many tell us, from "stipula," a straw, because it once was usual, when one person passed over landed property to another, that a straw from the land, as a pledge or earnest of the property transferred, should be handed from the seller to the buyer, which afterward was commonly preserved with, or inserted in, the title deeds. And we all know how important a fact of English history is laid up in "curfew" or "couvre-feu." The "limner," or "lumineur" (luminatore), brings us back to a period when the *illumination* of manuscripts was the leading occupation of the painter; so that from this work he derived his name. "Thrall" and "thraldom" descend to us from a period when it was the custom to *thrill* or drill the ear of a slave in token of

servitude; a custom in use among the Jews, (Deut. 15:17), and retained by our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, who were wont thus to pierce at the church-door the ears of their bond-servants. By "lumber," we are, or might be, taught that Lombards were the first pawnbrokers, even as they were the first bankers, in England; a "lumber"-room being a "lombard"-room, or room where the pawnbroker stored his pledges. Nor need I do more than remind you that in our common phrase of "*signing* our name" we preserve a record of a time when the first rudiments of education, such as the power of writing, were the portion of so few, that it was not as now the exception, but the custom for most persons to make their mark or "sign"; great barons and kings themselves not being ashamed to set this *sign* or cross to the weightiest documents. We more accurately express what now we do, when we speak of "subscribing the name."

We have abundant right then to speak of a history in words. Now suppose that the pieces of money which in the ordinary intercourse of life are passing through our hands, had each one something of its own which made it more or less worthy of note; if on one was stamped some striking maxim, on another some important fact, on a third a memorable date; if others were works of finest art, graven with rare and beautiful

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devices, or bearing the head of some ancient sage, or heroic king; while others, again, were the sole surviving monuments of mighty nations that once filled the world with their fame; what a careless indifference to our own improvement would it argue in us, if we were content that these should come and go, should stay by us or pass from us, without vouchsafing to them so much as one serious regard. Such a currency there is, a currency intellectual and spiritual of no meaner worth, and one with which we have to transact so much of the higher business of our lives. Let us see that we come not here under the condemnation of any such incurious dulness as that which I have imagined.

FOURTH TALK
THE RISE OF NEW WORDS

FOURTH TALK

THE RISE OF NEW WORDS

ONE of the most interesting branches of the study which is occupying us now is the taking note of the periods when great and significant words, or it may be even such as can hardly claim these epithets, have risen up and come into use, with the circumstances attending their rise. The different portions of my theme so run into one another that this is a subject which I have, tho unwillingly, already anticipated in part; yet is it one so curious, and which, I believe, may be made so instructive, that I purpose to dedicate this talk exclusively to it. Indeed, I am persuaded that a volume might be written which would have few to rival it in interest, that should do no more than indicate, or, where advisable, quote the first writer or the first document wherein new words, or old words employed in a new sense—such words, I mean, as have afterward played an important part in the world's history—have appeared. For the feeling wherewith we watch the rise above the horizon of these words, some of them to shine forever as luminaries in the moral and intellectual heaven above us, can oftentimes

be only likened to that which the poet so grandly describes, of—

“some watcher of the skies,
When a new planet swims into his ken.”

I would instance among words religious and ecclesiastical such as these: “Christian”; “Trinity”; “Catholic,” as an epithet applied to the Church; “canonical,” as a distinctive characteristic of the received Scriptures; “New Testament,” as describing the complex of the sacred books of the New Covenant; “Gospels,” as applied to the four inspired records of the life of our Lord—or, again, historical and geographical, as the first mention of India; of Europe; the first emerging of the names Germans and Germany; the first mention of the Alemanni; of the Franks; the earliest notice of Rome in any writer; or when the entire Hesperian peninsula acquired the title of Italy, which had been gradually creeping up for centuries from its southern extremity; when Asia on this side Taurus was first called Asia Minor; the earliest notice which we have of Normans under this title; who first gave to the newly-discovered continent in the west the name of America, and when; the period when this island exchanged its earlier name of Britain for Anglia or England; or, again, when it resumed Great Britain as its official designation. So, too, to go back in the world’s history, and to take

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one or two examples of a different character—at what moment the words “tyrant” and “tyranny,” marking so distinct an epoch as they do in the political history of Greece, first appeared; when, and from whom, the fabric of the external universe first received the title of “cosmos,” or “beautiful order”; with many more of the same description.

Of these which I have just adduced let us take, by way of sample, two, and try whether there is not much to be gathered from them, and from attending to the epoch and circumstances of their rise. Our first example is a remarkable one, for it shows us the Holy Spirit Himself counting a name, and the rise of a name, of so much importance, as to make it matter of special record in the Book of Life. “The disciples were called *Christians* first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). This might seem at first sight a notice curious and interesting, as all must possess interest for us which relates to the early days of the Church, but nothing more. And yet in truth how much of history is enfolded in this name; what light it throws on the early history of Christianity to know when and where it was first imposed on the faithful—“imposed,” I say, for it is clearly a name which they did not give to themselves, but received from their adversaries, however afterward they may have learned to accept it as a title of honor, and to glory in it. For it is not said that

they "*called themselves*" but "*were called*" Christians first at Antioch; nor do we find the name anywhere in Scripture except on the lips of those alien from, or opposed to, the Gospel (Acts 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). And as it was a name imposed by adversaries, so among those adversaries it was plainly the heathen, and not the Jews, that gave it; since the Jews would never have called the followers of Jesus of Nazareth "Christians," or "those of Christ," seeing that the very point of their opposition to Him was that He was not the Christ, but a false pretender to this name.

Starting then from this point, that "Christians" was a name given to the early disciples by the heathen, let us see what we may learn from it. Now we know that Antioch was the headquarters of the earliest missions to the heathen, even as Jerusalem was to those of the seed of Abraham. It was there and among the faithful there that the sense of the world-wide destination of the Gospel arose: there it was first plainly seen as intended for all kindreds of the earth. Hitherto the faithful in Christ had been called by their enemies, and indeed often were still called, "Galileans," or "Nazarenes," both names which indicated the Jewish cradle in which the Gospel had been nursed, and that the world saw in it no more than a Jewish sect. But the name "Christians," or "those

of Christ," imposed upon them now, while it indicated that Christ and the confession of His name was felt even by the world to be the sum and center of their religion, showed also that the heathen had now come to comprehend, I do not say what the Church would be, but what it claimed to be—no mere variety of Judaism, but a society with a far wider mission: it is clear that, when this name was given, the Church, even in the world's eyes, had chipped its Jewish shell. Nor will the attentive reader fail to observe that the imposing of this name on believers is by closest juxtaposition connected in the sacred narrative, and still more closely in the Greek than in the English, with St. Paul's first arrival at Antioch, and preaching there; he being the especial and appointed instrument for bringing the Church into the recognition of this its destination for all men. As so often happens with the rise of a new name, the rise of this one marked a new epoch in the Church's life, its entrance upon a new stage of its development.

It is a merely subordinate matter, but yet I might just observe how strikingly what we know from other quarters confirms the accuracy of this account, which lays the invention of this name to the credit of the Antiochenes. The idle and witty inhabitants of Antioch were famous in all antiquity for the invention of nicknames; it was a manufacture

in which they particularly excelled. And thus it was exactly the place, where beforehand we might have expected that such a name, being a nickname or little better in the mouths of those that devised it, should have first sprung up.

Our other example shall be "Anglia," or "England." When and under what circumstances did this island exchange for this its earlier name of Britain, which it had borne for more than a thousand years? There seems no sufficient reason for calling in question, tho some have so done, the statement of the old chronicler that it received this new name of Anglia from Egbert, king of Wessex, who with the sanction of his Parliament or Witanegemot, holden A.D. 800 in this very city of Winchester, determined that the name "Britain" should give place to "England." It may be that the change was not effected by any such formal act as this, yet the accuracy of the old historian, so far at least as his date is concerned, receives strong confirmation from the circumstance that "Anglia," which is nowhere to be traced in any documents anterior to this period, does immediately after begin to appear.

What lessons for the student of English history are here, in the knowledge of this one fact, if he will but seek to look at it all round, and consider it in a thoughtful spirit. I have said that the rise of a new name marks often

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a new epoch in history; certainly it was so in the instance before us. In the first place, as it is the just law of names, that a people should give a name to the land which they possess, not receive one from it, as the Franks make Gaul to be France, do not suffer themselves to become Gauls, so, as regards our own land, it is plain from the coming up of this name that there must have been now a sense in men's minds that its transformation from a land of Britons to a land of Angles was at length completely accomplished, and might therefore justly claim to find its recognition in a word. That the Normans never made a "Normanland" out of England, as they had out of Neustria, and as the Angles had made an "Angle-land" out of Britain; that they never so supplanted the population or dissolved the social framework of the Angles, as these had done of the Britons, is evident from the fact that there went along with *their* conquest of the land no such substitution of a new name for the old, no such obliteration of the old by the new, as on that prior occupation of the soil had found place. And then, further, how significant a fact that the invading German tribes, which had hitherto been content to call themselves according to the different provinces or districts which they occupied, should have now felt that they needed, and out of that need should have given birth to, a name common to and

including the whole land. Was there not here a sign that the sense of unity, of all making up one corporate body, one nation, was emerging out of the confusion of the preceding period of the heptarchy? We know from other sources that Egbert was the first who united the different kingdoms of the heptarchy under his single scepter; the first in whom the nation was knit together into one. How instructive to find a name which should be the symbol of unity, coming to the birth at this very moment. In respect, too, of the relations between themselves of the two most important tribes which had settled in this island, the Angles and the Saxons (the Jutes were too few to contend for the honor), it is assuredly a weighty fact that it was the Angles alone, from whom, tho numerically inferior, the new appellation was derived. Doubtless, a moral or political predominance of this tribe, probably a political founded on a moral, asserted itself in this fact. We are the less inclined to attribute it to accident from the circumstance that in the phrase "Anglo-Saxons" (Angli-Saxones), a term which is no modern invention of convenience, as is sometimes erroneously asserted, but is of earlier use even than Anglia, the Angles have again the precedence, and the Saxons only follow.

It will be seen, I think, by these two examples that new words will repay any atten-

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tion which we may bestow upon them, and upon the conditions under which they emerge. Let us proceed to consider the causes which give them birth, the periods when a language is most fruitful in them, the regions of society from which they usually proceed, with some other interesting phenomena about them.

That cause which more than any other creates the necessity for these additions to the vocabulary of a language, and evokes the words which shall supply this necessity, when it is felt, is beyond a question this; namely, that in the appointments of highest wisdom there are certain cardinal epochs in the world's history, in which, far more than at other times, new moral and spiritual forces begin to work, and to stir society to its central depths. When it is thus with a people, they make claims upon their language which were never made upon it before. It is required to utter truths, to express ideas, which were strange to it in the time of its first molding and shaping, and for which, therefore, the terms sufficient will naturally not be found in it at once, these new thoughts and feelings being larger and deeper than any with which hitherto the speakers of that tongue had been familiar. But when the bed of a river is suddenly required to deliver a far greater volume of waters than till now has been its wont, it is nothing strange if it should surmount its banks, break forth on

the right hand and on the left, or even force new channels with something of violence for itself. The most illustrious example of this whereof I speak is, of course, the coming in of Christianity, or, including the anterior dispensation, of revealed religion into the ancient heathen world, with the consequent necessity under which the great novel truths which were then proclaimed to mankind lay, of clothing themselves in the language of men, and first in the languages of Greece and Rome, languages which in their previous form might have sufficed, and did suffice, for heathenism, sensuous and finite as it was, but not for the spiritual and infinite of the new dispensation. How often had the new thoughts to weave a new garment for themselves, inasmuch as that which they found ready made was too narrow to wrap themselves withal; the new wine to find new vessels for itself, that both might be preserved, the old vessels being neither sufficiently strong nor expansive to hold it.

Thus, not to speak of mere technical matters which would claim their utterance, how could the Greek language have had a word for "idolatry," so long as the sense of the awful contrast between the worship of the living God and of dead things had not risen up in their minds that spoke it? But when men began to employ Greek, and that as the sole utterance and voice of all that was in

them, men to whom this distinction and contrast was the most earnest and the deepest conviction of their lives, the words "idolatry," "idolater," of necessity appeared. The heathen claimed not for their deities to be "searchers of hearts," disclaimed not for them the being "accepters of persons"; such attributes of power and righteousness entered not into their minds as pertaining to the objects of their worship. The Greek language, therefore, so long as they only employed it, had not the words corresponding. It indeed could not have had, as the Jewish Hellenistic Greek could not have been without, them. In like manner, where else but in the bosom of the same Jewish Greek could the word "theocracy" have been born?

These difficulties, which would be felt the most strongly when the thought and feeling which had been at home in the Hebrew, the original language of inspiration, were to be translated into Greek, would also reappear, tho naturally not to the same extent, when that which had gradually woven for itself in the Greek an adequate attire, again demanded to find garments in the Latin, wherein it might be suitably arrayed. A single example of the difficulty, and the way it was ultimately overcome, will illustrate this better than long disquisitions. There was in the Greek a word for "savior," which, altho it had often been degraded to unworthy uses,

having been applied not merely to heathen deities, but bestowed as a title of honor on men, and on such sometimes as were rather "destroyers" than "saviors" of their fellows, was yet in itself sufficient to set forth that central office and dignity of Christ—the word being like some profaned temple, which did not need to be rebuilt, but only to be consecrated anew. With the Latin it was otherwise; the language seemed to be without a word of such frequent recurrence and essential use to Christianity: indeed, Cicero, than whom none could know better the capabilities of his own tongue, distinctly declared that it possessed no single word corresponding to the Greek "savior." "Salvator" would have been the natural word; but the classical Latin, tho it had "salus" and "salvus," had neither this, nor the verb "salvare." I say the classical, for some believe that "salvare" had always existed in the common speech. "Servator" was instinctively felt to be insufficient, even as in English "Preserver" would fall very short of uttering all for us which "Savior" does now; the seeking of the strayed, the recovering of the lost, the healing of the sick—all this would be very feebly and faintly insinuated in "Preserver." God "*preserveth* man and beast," but He is the "Savior" of His own, in a far more inward and far tenderer sense. For some time the Latin Christian writers were in considerable

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perplexity how they should render the Greek word, employing "salutare," "sospitator," and other terms more unsatisfactory still, as, for instance, the "salutificator" of Tertullian. The strong good sense of Augustine, however, finally disposed of the difficulty. He made no scruple about employing "Salvator"; observing well, and with a true insight into the law of the growth of words, that "Salvator" may not have been, and indeed was not, good Latin before the Savior came; but when He came, He made it to be such; for as shadows attend substances, so words follow upon things.

These are, as I said, the most illustrious examples of the coming in of a new world of thoughts and feelings into the bosom of humanity, whereby has been necessitated a corresponding creation in the world of words, their outward representatives. And the same necessity has repeated itself continually since; each new reception of the Word of life by another people must needs bring over again the same effects with more or less striking features. It is true we are not so favorably placed for tracing these effects as in the cases of the two classical languages of antiquity: yet our missionaries, to whom the study of language is in many respects so greatly indebted, have incidentally told us much on this subject, and, were their attention called to it, might doubtless tell us much more.

But it is not only when new truth directly from God has thus to fit itself to the lips of men, that such enlargements of speech follow: but in each further unfolding of those seminal truths, implanted in man's heart at the first, in each new enlargement of his sphere of knowledge, outward or inward, lie the same necessities involved. The beginnings and progressive advances of moral philosophy in Greece, the transplanting of the same to Rome, the rise of the scholastic, and then of the mystic, theology in the middle ages, the discoveries of modern science and natural philosophy, all these have been accompanied with corresponding extensions in the limits of language. Of the words to which each of these has in turn given birth, many, it is true, have never passed beyond their own peculiar sphere, having remained technical, scientific, or purely theological to the last; but many also have passed over from the laboratory, the school, and the pulpit, into daily life, and have, with the ideas which they incorporate, become the common heritage of all. For however hard and repulsive a front any study or science may seem to present to the great body of those who are as laymen to it, there is yet inevitably such a detrition as this going forward in the case of each, and it would not be a little interesting for one who was furnished with the knowledge sufficient to trace it in all.

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Where the movement is a great popular one, stirring the heart and mind of a people to its very depths, such as the first reception of the Christian faith, there these new words will be for the most part born out of their bosom, a free spontaneous birth, seldom or never capable of being referred to one man more than another, because they belong to all. Where, on the contrary, the movement is not so, is more strictly theological, or finds place in those regions of science and philosophy, where, as first pioneers and discoverers, only a few can bear their parts, there the additions and extensions will lack something of the freedom, the unconscious boldness, which marked the others. Their character will be more artificial, less spontaneous, altho here also the creative genius of the single man, as there of the nation, will oftentimes set its mark; and many a single word will come forth, which shall be the result of profound meditation, or of intuitive genius, or of both in happiest combination—many a word, which shall as a torch illuminate vast regions comparatively obscure before, and, it may be, cast its rays far into the yet unexplored darkness beyond; or which, summing up into itself all the acquisitions in a particular direction, of the past, shall be as a mighty vantage-ground from which to advance to new conquests in the realms of mind or of nature, not as yet subdued to the intellect of man.

As occupying something of a middle place between those more deliberate word-makers, and the people whose words rather grow than are made, we must not omit him who is a *maker* by the very right of his name—I mean the poet. That creative energy with which he is endowed, “the high-flying liberty of conceit proper to the poet,” will, in all probability, manifest itself in this region as in others. Extending the domain of thought and feeling, he will scarcely fail to extend that also of language, which does not willingly lag behind. And the loftier his moods, the more of this maker he will be. The passion of such times, the all-fusing imagination, will at once suggest and justify audacities in speech, upon which in calmer moods he would not venture, or, if he ventured, would fail to carry others with him, for only the fluent metal runs easily into novel shapes and molds. It is not merely that the old and the familiar will often become new in his hands; that he will give the stamp of allowance, as to him it will be free to do, to words, should he count them worthy, which hitherto have lived only on the lips of the multitude, or been confined to some single dialect and province; but he will enrich his native tongue with words unknown and non-existent before—non-existent, that is, save in their elements; for in the historic period of a language it is not permitted to any man to bring new roots into it, but only

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to work on materials which have already been given; to evolve what is latent therein, to combine what is apart, to recall what has fallen out of sight.

But to return to the more deliberate coining of words. This will often find place for the supplying of discovered deficiencies in a language. The manner in which men most often become aware of such deficiencies, is through the comparison of their own language with another and a richer, a comparison which is forced upon them, so that they can not put it by, when it becomes necessary for them to express in their own tongue that which has already found utterance in another, and so has, at any rate, shown that it is utterable in human speech. Without such a comparison, the existence of the want would probably have seldom dawned even on the most thoughtful. For language is to so great an extent the condition and limit of thought, men are so little accustomed, indeed so little able, to meditate on things, except through the intervention, and by the machinery, of words, that nothing short of this would bring them to a sense of the actual existence of any such wants. And it is, I may observe, one of the advantages of acquaintance with another language besides our own, and of the institution which will follow, if we have learned that other to any purpose, of these comparisons, that we thus come to be aware that

names are not, and least of all the names which any single language possesses, coextensive with things (and by "things" I mean subjects as well as objects of thought, whatever one can *think* about); that a multitude of things exist which, tho capable of being resumed in a word, are yet without one, unnamed and unregistered; so that, vast as is the world of names, the world of realities is even vaster still. Such discoveries the Romans made when they attempted to transplant the moral philosophy of Greece to an Italian soil; they found that many of its words had no equivalents in their own tongue, which equivalents therefore they proceeded with more or less success to devise for themselves, appealing, with this view, to the latent capacities of their own tongue. For example, the Greek schools had a word, and one playing no unimportant part in some of their systems, to express "apathy," or the absence of all passion and pain. As it was absolutely necessary to possess a corresponding word, Cicero invented "indolentia," as that "if I may so speak" with which he paves the way to his first introduction of it, manifestly declares.

Sometimes, indeed, such a skilful mint-master of words, such a subtle watcher and weigher of their forces as he was, will note, even without this comparison with other languages, an omission in his own, which there-

upon he will endeavor to supply. Thus was it with him in regard of "invidentia." While there existed in the Latin two adjectives which, tho sometimes confusedly used, had yet each its peculiar meaning, "invidus," one who is envious, "invidiosus," one who excites envy in others, there was only one substantive "invidia," the correlative of them both; with the disadvantage therefore of being employed now in an active, now in a passive sense, now for the envy which men feel, and now for that which they excite. The word he saw was made to do double duty, and that under a seeming unity there lurked a real dualism, from which manifold confusions might follow. He therefore devised "invidentia," to express the active envy, or the envying, no doubt desiring that "invidia" should be restrained to the passive, the being envied. To all appearance the word came to supply a real want, yet he did not succeed in giving it currency; indeed, does not seem himself to have much cared to employ it again.

We see by this example that not every word, which even a great master of language proposes, finds acceptance. Provided some live, he must be contented that others should fall to the ground, and die. Nor is this the only one which Cicero unsuccessfully proposed. His "indolentia," which I mentioned just now, hardly passed beyond himself; his "vitiositas," "indigentia," and "mulierosi-

tas," not at all. "Beatitas" too and "beatitudo," both of his coining, but which he owns to have something strange and uncouth about them, can hardly be said to have found more than the faintest echo in the classical literature of Rome; "beatitudo," indeed, obtained a home, as it deserved to do, in the Christian Church, but the other made no way whatsoever. I do not suppose that Coleridge's "esemplastic," with which he was himself so much pleased, will find any considerable favor with others; while the words of Jeremy Taylor, of such Latinists as Sir Thomas Browne, and of others, that were born only to die, are multitudinous as the leaves of autumn. Still even the word which fails is often, tho not always, an honorable testimony to the scholarship, the accuracy of thought, the imagination of its proposer; and Ben Jonson is overhard on "neologists," if I may bring this term back to its earlier meaning, when he says: "A man coins not a new word without some peril, and less fruit; for if it happen to be received, the praise is but moderate; if refused, the scorn is assured."

I alluded just now to comprehensive words, which should singly be effectual to say that which hitherto it had taken many words to say, in which a higher term has been reached than before had been found. It is difficult to estimate too highly the value of such words for the facilitating of mental processes, and

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indeed for the making possible of many which would have been nearly or quite impracticable without them; and those who have invented such words, or have succeeded in putting them into circulation, may be esteemed as benefactors of a high order to knowledge. In the ordinary traffic of life, unless our dealings were on the smallest scale, we should willingly have about us our money in the shape rather of silver than of copper; and if our transactions were at all extensive, rather in gold than in silver; while, if we were setting forth upon a long and arduous journey, we should be best pleased to turn even our gold coin itself into bills of exchange or circular notes; in fact, into the highest denomination of money which it was capable of assuming. How many words with which we are now perfectly familiar are for us what bills of exchange or circular notes are for the traveler and the merchant. As in one of these last, innumerable pence, a multitude of shillings, not a few pounds are gathered up and represented, so have we in some single word the quintessence and final result of an infinite number of anterior mental processes, ascending one above the other, and all of which have been at length summed up for us in that one. Or we may compare that word to some great river, which does not bring its flood of waters to the sea, till many rills have been swallowed up in brooks, and brooks in

streams, and streams in tributary rivers, each of these affluents having lost its individual name and existence in that which at last at once represents and is continent of them all.

Let us only consider all which must have gone before, ere the word "circle," with its corresponding idea, could have come into existence; and then imagine how it would be, if as often as in some long and difficult mathematical problem we had to refer to the figure so named, we were obliged to introduce the entire definition of it, because no single word stood for it—and not this only, but the definition of each term employed in the definition—how impossible or nearly impossible it would prove to carry the whole process in the mind, or to take oversight of its steps. Imagine a few more words struck out of the vocabulary of the mathematician, and if all mental activity in his direction was not altogether arrested, yet would it be as effectually restricted as commerce and exchange would be, if all transactions had to be carried on with iron or copper as the sole medium of mercantile intercourse. It is not, indeed, to be supposed that words of such primary, almost vital, necessity for the science whereto they pertain as that I have just referred to, still wait to be coined; but yet, wherever knowledge is progressive, words are keeping pace with it, which with more or less felicity resume in themselves very much of the labors

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of the past, at once assist and abridge the labors of the future; being as tools which, themselves the result of the finest mechanical skill, do at the same time render other and further triumphs of art possible, such as would have been quite unattainable without them.

But it is not merely the widening of men's intellectual horizon, which, as it brings new thoughts within the range of their vision, constrains the origination of corresponding words; but when regions of this outward world hitherto closed are laid open to them, the various novel objects of interest which these contain will demand to find their names, and not merely to be catalogued in the nomenclature of science, but in so far as they present themselves to the popular eye, will require a popular name. As, however, nothing is rarer in this world than the invention of aught which is entirely new, men will most often content themselves with applying to this new a name drawn from that old where-with they are already familiar, which resembles it the most. Yet this may be done with modifications and combinations, which shall vindicate for it an original character. Thus, when the Romans became acquainted with the stately giraffe, long concealed from them in the inner wilds of Africa (which we learn from Pliny they first did in the shows exhibited by Julius Cæsar), it was happily

imagined to designate a creature combining, tho wit infinitely more grace, yet something of the height and even the proportions of the *camel* with the spotted skin of the *pard*, by a name which should incorporate both these its most prominent features, calling it the "camelopard." Nor can we, I think, hesitate to accept that account as the true one, which describes the word as no artificial creation of the scientific naturalist, but as bursting extempore from the lips of the populace at the first moment when the novel creature was presented to their gaze. "Cerfvolant," a name which the French have so happily given to the horned scarabeus, the same which we somewhat less poetically call the "stag-beetle," is another example of which may be effected with the old materials by merely bringing them into new combinations.

One of the most legitimate methods by which a language may increase in wealth, especially in the times when its generative energy is in great part spent, as after a time will be the case with all, is through the reviving of old words, not, that is, without discrimination, but of such as are worthy to be revived; which yet through carelessness, or ill-placed fastidiousness, or a growing unacquaintance on the part of a later generation with the elder worthies of the language, or some other cause, have been suffered to drop. These words, obsolete or obsolescent, it will

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sometimes happen that some writer instructed in the early literature of his native language is not willing to let die, and himself using or suggesting to the use of others, is successful in again putting into circulation. And to the poet more than any other it will be thus free to recall and recover the forgotten treasures of his native language. Yet if success is to attend his attempt, or that of any other, the words to which it is thus sought to impart a second life must scarcely belong to the hoar antiquities of the language, with the dust of many centuries upon them, being not merely out of use, but out of all memory as well. A word which has not been employed since Chaucer is in a very different position from one that has only dropt out of active service since Spenser or Shakespeare, and which, being found in their writings or in those of their great compeers, has preserved for the circle of educated readers a certain vitality.

“Mob” and “sham” had their birth in one of the most shameful periods of English history, that between the Restoration and Revolution. The first of these words originated in a certain club in London in the latter end of the reign of Charles the Second. “I may note,” says a writer of the time, “that the rabble first changed their title, and were called the “mob” in the assemblies of this (the Green Ribbon) club. It was their beast

of burden, and called first "mobile vulgus," but fell naturally into the contraction of one syllable, and ever since is become proper English." Yet we find considerably later a writer in *The Spectator* speaking of "mob" as still only struggling into existence. "I dare not answer," he says, "that mob, rap, pos, incog., and the like will not in time be looked at as part of our tongue." In regard of "mob" for the "mobile" vulgar, the multitude swayed hither and thither by each gust of passion or caprice, this, which *The Spectator* hardly expected, while he confest it possible, has actually taken place. "It is one of the many words, formerly slang, which are now used by our best writers, and received, like pardoned outlaws, into the body of respectable citizens."

And tho the murdering of poor, helpless lodgers, afterward to sell their bodies for dissection, can not be regarded as a crime in which the nation had a share, or anything but the monstrous wickedness of one or two, yet the word to "burke," drawn from the name of a wretch who long pursued this hideous traffic, a word which has won its place in the language, will be a lasting memorial in all after times, unless indeed its origin should be forgotten, to how strange a crime this age of boasted civilization could give birth.

Such are some of the sources of increase

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in the wealth of a language, or, it may be, in that which has no just title to be termed by this name. There have been, from time to time, those who have so little understood what a language and the laws of a language are, that they have sought by decrees of theirs to arrest its growth, pronouncing it to have attained to the limits of its growth and development, so that no one should henceforward presume to make further additions to it. But a language has a life, just as really as a man or as a tree; as a man, it must grow to its full stature, being also submitted to his conditions of decay; as a forest tree will defy any feeble bands which should attempt to control its expansion, so long as the principle of growth is in it; as a tree, too, will continually, while it casts off some leaves, be putting forth others. The attempt, therefore, has utterly failed, even when made under the most favorable conditions for success. For instance, the French Academy, containing the great body of the distinguished literary men of France, once sought to exercise such a domination over their own language, and if any could have succeeded, might have hoped to do so. But the language recked of their decrees as little as the advancing ocean did of those of Canute. They were obliged to give way, and in each successive edition of their Dictionary to throw open its doors to words which had established themselves in

the language, and would hold their ground, comparatively indifferent whether they received the Academy's seal of allowance or no.

Sir Thomas Elyot (1534), speaks of the now familiar words "frugality," "maturity," "temperance," "sobriety," "industry," as being not in his day in general use, or as being only of very recent introduction into the language. The translators of the authorized Version of the Bible, in a preface not now often reprinted, but prefixt to the original edition (1611), find fault, and others had done the same before them, with the Greek and Latin words—"inkhorn terms," Fulke calls them—wherewith the Rhemish translators so plentifully sprinkled their translation; with the intention, as these last affirmed, of preserving for it an ecclesiastical character; but as others, and we can scarcely say uncharitably, charged them, that so, if they must give the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, they might yet keep them, as far as might be, "dark and unprofitable to the ignorant readers." In many cases the accusation was quite borne out by the facts, and the Greek and Latin, not to speak of Hebrew, terms they employed, "azymes," "comessations," "pasche," and the like, could never have made themselves at home in English; but this certainly is not so in all. Thus, "rational," "tunic," "scandal," "holocaust," "neophyte," were severally either words

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which had not been invented by the Rhemish translators, having existed long before; or the sequel has gone far to justify the coinage, the words having been freely absorbed into the language as useful additions to it. "Mob," as we saw just now, is a word comparatively of late date, belonging to the latter half of the seventeenth century.

When a word has proved an unquestionable gain to the language, it is very interesting to preside, so to speak, at its birth, to watch it as it first comes forth, timid, and it may be as yet doubtful of the reception it will meet with; and the interest is very much enhanced if it thus comes forth on some memorable occasion, or from some memorable man. Both these interests meet in the word "essay." If any one were asked what is the most remarkable volume of essays which the world has seen, few, having sufficient oversight of the field of literature to be capable of replying, would fail to answer, Lord Bacon's. But they were also the first which bore that name; for we certainly gather from the following passage in the (intended) dedication of the volume to Prince Henry, that the word "essay" was altogether a very recent one in the English language, and in the use to which he put it, perfectly novel. He says: "To write just treatises requireth leisure in the writer, and leisure in the reader; . . . which is the cause which hath made me choose

to write certain brief notes set down rather significantly than curiously, which I have called *Essays*. The word is late, but the thing is ancient." From these words, and others which I have omitted in the quotation, we further gather that, little as "essays" at the present day can be considered a word of modesty, deprecating too large expectations on the part of the reader, it had, as "sketches" perhaps would have now, as "commentary" had in the Latin, such an ethical significance in this its earliest use. In this last respect it resembled the "philosopher" of Pythagoras. Before his time the founders of systems of philosophy had styled themselves, or been willing to be styled by others, "wise men." This appellation, "lover of wisdom," so modest and so beautiful, was of his devising.

In their power of taking up foreign or otherwise new words into healthy circulation, and making them truly their own, languages are very different as compared with one another, and the same language is very different from itself at different periods of its life. There are languages of which the appetite and digestive power, the assimilative energy, is at some periods almost unlimited. Nothing is too hard for them; they will shape and mold to their own uses and habits almost whatsoever is offered to them. This, however, is in their youth; as age advances, this

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assimilative power diminishes. Words are still adopted; for this process of adoption can never wholly cease; but a chemical amalgamation of the new with the old does not any longer find place, or only in some instances, and very partially even in them. They lie often on the surface of the language; their sharp corners are not worn and rounded off; they remain foreign still in their aspect and outline, and, having missed their opportunity of becoming otherwise, will remain so to the end. Those who adopt, as with an inward misgiving about their own gift and power of stamping them afresh, seem to make a conscience of keeping them in exactly the same form in which they have received them; instead of conforming them to the laws of that new community into which they are now received. Nothing will illustrate this so well as a comparison of different words of the same family, which have at different periods been introduced into our language. We shall find that those of an earlier introduction have become English through and through, while the later introduced, belonging to the same group, have been very far from undergoing the same transforming process. Thus "bishop," a word as old as the introduction of Christianity into England, tho not hiding its descent from "episcopus," is thoroughly English; while "episcopal," which has supplanted "bishoply," is only a Latin word

in an English dress. "Alms," too, is genuine English, and English which has descended to us from far; the very shape in which we have the word, one syllable for "eleemosyna" of six, sufficiently testifying this; "letters," as Horne Tooke observes, "like soldiers, being apt to desert and drop off in a long march." I need not say that the long and awkward "eleemosynary" is of a very much more recent date.

One of the most striking facts about new words, and a very signal testimony of their birth from the bosom of the people, that is, where they are not plainly from the schools, is the difficulty which is so often found in tracing their pedigree. When the *causæ vocum* are sought, which they justly are, and out of much more than mere curiosity, for the *causæ rerum* are very often contained in them, they continually elude research; and this, not merely where attention has only been called to the words, and interest about their etymology excited, long after they had been in popular use, and when thus they had left their origin, whatever it may have been, very far behind them—for that the words of a remote antiquity should often puzzle and perplex us, should give scope to idle guesses, or altogether defy conjecture, this is nothing strange—but even when it has been sought to investigate their origin almost as soon as they have come into existence. Their rise

is mysterious; like so many other acts of *becoming* it is veiled in deepest obscurity. They appear, they are in everybody's mouth; but yet, when it is inquired from whence they are, nobody can tell. They are but of yesterday, and yet with a marvelous rapidity they have already forgotten the circumstances of their origin. Thus, Baxter tells us in his most instructive "Narrative of His Life and Times," that there already existed two explanations of "Roundhead," a word not nearly so old as himself. "Cannibal," as a designation of man-eating savages, came first into use with the great discoveries in the western world of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: no certain explanation of it has yet been offered. This is nowhere more striking than in the names applied to political or religious parties, and above all, in the names of slight, of contempt, of scorn. How much has been written about the origin of the German "Ketzer," or heretic, which yet is still in debate; hardly less about the French "cagot," which, however, is pretty certainly "*canis Gothicus*." Is "Lollard," or "Loller" as we have it in Chaucer, from "lollen," to chaunt? That is, does it mean the chaunting, or canting people? Or had the Lollards their title from a principal person among them of this name, who suffered at the stake?—to say nothing of a proposed derivation from "lolium," these men being regarded by

their adversaries are *larcs* among the wholesome wheat. The origin of "Hugonot," as applied to the French Protestants, was already a matter of doubt and discussion in the lifetime of those who first bore it. Were the "Waldenses" so called from one Peter Waldo, to whom these "Poor Men of Lyons," as they were at first called, owed their origin? Or is "Waldenses" for Vallenses, the men of the Alpine valleys, the Dalesmen?—a question, the certain determination of which would go far to settle the most difficult and disputed points in the history of these witnesses for scriptural truth. One might anticipate that a name like "Canada," given, and within fresh historic times, to a vast territory, would be accounted for, but it is not; so, too, that the Anglo-Americans would be able to explain how they got their word "caucus," which plays so prominent a part in their elections, but they can not.

These are but a handful of examples of the way in which words forget the circumstances of their birth. Now if we could believe in any merely *arbitrary* words, standing in connection with nothing but the mere lawless caprice of some inventor, the impossibility of tracing their derivations would be nothing strange. Indeed, it would be lost labor to seek for the parentage of all words, when many perhaps had none. But there is no such thing; there is no word which is not, as the

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Spanish gentleman loves to call himself, an "hidalgo," the son of something. All are the embodiment, more or less successful, of a sensation, a thought, or a fact; or if of more fortuitous birth, still they attach themselves somewhere to the already subsisting world of words and things, and have their point of contact with it and departure from it, not always discoverable, as we see, but yet always existing. And thus, when a word entirely refuses to give up the secret of its origin, it can be regarded in no other light but as a riddle which no one has succeeded in solving, a lock of which no one has found the key; but still a riddle which has a solution, a lock for which there is a key, tho now, it may be, irrecoverably lost.

I know not how I can better conclude this address than by quoting some words which express with a rare eloquence all which I have been laboring to utter; for this truth, which many, indeed, have noticed, none that I am aware of have set forth with at all the same fulness of illustration, or with at all the same sense of its importance, as the author of "The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences," whose words now quoted are but one out of many passages on the same theme: "Language is often called an instrument of thought, but it is also the nutriment of thought; or, rather, it is the atmosphere in which thought lives; a medium essential to the activity of our

speculative powers, altho invisible and imperceptible in its operation; and an element modifying, by its qualities and changes, the growth and complexion of the faculties which it feeds. In this way the influence of preceding discoveries upon subsequent ones, of the past upon the present, is most penetrating and universal, altho most subtle and difficult to trace. The most familiar words and phrases are connected by imperceptible ties with the reasonings and discoveries of former men and distant times. Their knowledge is an inseparable part of ours; the present generation inherits and uses the scientific wealth of all the past. And this is the fortune, not only of the great and rich in the intellectual world, of those who have the key to the ancient storehouses, and who have accumulated treasures of their own, but the humblest inquirer, while he puts his reasonings into words, benefits by the labors of the greatest. When he counts his little wealth he finds he has in his hands coins which bear the image and superscription of ancient and modern intellectual dynasties, and that in virtue of this possession acquisitions are in his power, solid knowledge within his reach, which none could ever have attained to, if it were not that the gold of truth once dug out of the mine circulates more and more widely among mankind."

FIFTH TALK
THE DISTINCTION OF WORDS

FIFTH TALK

THE DISTINCTION OF WORDS

IT is to the subject of synonyms and their distinction, with the advantages which may be derived from the study of these, that I propose to devote the present address. But what, it may be asked, do we mean when, comparing certain words with one another, we affirm of them that they are synonyms? We mean that they are words which, with great and essential resemblances of meaning, have at the same time small, subordinate, and partial differences—these differences being such as either originally, and on the ground of their etymology, inhered in them; or differences which they have by usage acquired in the eyes of all; or such as, tho nearly latent now, they are capable of receiving at the hands of wise and discreet masters of the tongue. Synonyms are words of like significance in the main, but with a certain unlikeness as well.

So soon as the term is defined thus, it will be at once perceived by any acquainted with the derivation, that strictly speaking, it is a misnomer, and is given to these words with a certain inaccuracy and impropriety; since in strictness the terms “synonyms,” or

“synonymous,” applied to words, would affirm of them that they covered not merely almost the same extent of meaning, but altogether and exactly the same, that they were in their signification perfectly identical and coincident. The terms, however, are not ordinarily so used, and plainly are not so, when it is undertaken to trace out the distinction between synonyms; for, without denying that there are such absolutely coincident words, such perfect synonyms, yet these could not be the object of any such discrimination; since, where there was no real distinction, it would be lost labor and the exercise of a perverse ingenuity to attempt to draw one. Synonyms, then, as the words are generally understood, and as I shall use them here, are words with slight differences already existing between them, or with the capabilities of such. They are not, on the one side, words absolutely identical; but neither, we may add, on the other, only very remotely related to one another; for the differences between these last will be self-evident, will so lie on the surface and proclaim themselves to all that it would be impossible to make them clearer than they already are, and it would be like holding a candle to the sun to attempt it. They must be words which are more or less liable to confusion, but which yet ought not to be confounded; words, as one has said, “*quae conjungi, non confundi, debent*”;

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words in which there originally inhered a difference, or between which, the once absolutely identical, such has gradually grown up, and so established itself in the use of the best writers, and in the instinct of the best speakers of the tongue, that it claims to be recognized and openly admitted by all.

But here an interesting question presents itself to us, which is this, How do languages come to possess synonyms of this latter class, which are differenced not by etymology or other deep-lying and necessary distinction, but only by usage? Now if they had been made by agreement, of course no such words could exist; for when one word had been found which was the adequate representative of a feeling or an object, no further one would have been sought. But languages are the result of processes very different from, and far less formal and regular than, this. Various tribes, each with its own dialect, kindred indeed, but in many respects distinct, coalesce into one people, and cast their contributions of language into a common stock. Thus the French possesses many synonyms from the *langue d'Oc* and *langue d'Oil*, each having contributed its word for one and the same thing, as "âtre" and "foyer," both for hearth. Sometimes two have the same word, but in forms sufficiently different to cause that both remain, but as different words; thus in Latin, "serpo" and "repo" are

merely two slightly different appropriations of the same Greek word, and of "puteo" and "foeteo" the same may be said; just as in German, "Odem" and "Athem" were originally only dialectic differences of the same word. Or again, a conquering people have fixt themselves in the midst of a conquered; they impose their dominion, but do not succeed in imposing their language; nay, being few in number, they find themselves at last compelled to adopt the language of the conquered; or after a while that which may be called a transaction, a compromise between the two languages, find place. Thus it was in England; our modern English being in the main such a compromise between the Anglo-Saxons and the Norman-French.

These are the causes of the existence of synonyms, which reach far back into the history of a nation and a language; but other causes at a later period are also at work. When a written literature springs up, authors familiar with various foreign tongues, import from one and another words which are not absolutely required, which are oftentimes rather luxuries than necessities. Sometimes having a very good word of their own, they must needs go and look for a finer one, as they esteem it, from abroad; as, for instance, the Latin having its own good and expressive "succinum" (from "succus"), for amber, some must import from the Greek the am-

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biguous "electrum." But of these which are thus proposed as candidates for admission, some fail to obtain the rights of citizenship, and after longer or shorter probation are rejected; it may be, never advance beyond their first proposer. Enough, however, receive the stamp of popular allowance to create embarrassment for a while, until, that is, their relations with the already existing words are adjusted. As a single illustration of the various quarters from which the English has thus been augmented and enriched, I would instance the words "trick," "device," "finesse," "artifice," and "stratagem," and enumerate the various sources from which we have drawn them. Here "trick" is Saxon, "devisa" is Italian, "finesse" is French, "artificium" is Latin, and "stratagema" Greek.

By and by, however, as a language becomes itself an object of greater attention, at the same time that society, advancing from a simpler to a more complex state, has more things to designate, more thoughts to utter, and more distinctions to draw, it is felt to be a waste of resources to have two or more words for the signifying of one and the same object. Men feel, and rightly, that with a boundless world lying around them and demanding to be named, and which they only make their own in the measure and to the extent that they do name it, with infinite shades

and varieties of thought and feeling subsisting in their own minds, and claiming to find utterance in words, it is a mere and wanton extravagance to expend two or more signs on that which could adequately be set forth by one—an extravagance in one part of their expenditure which will be almost sure to issue in, and to be punished by, a corresponding scantness and straitness in another. Some thought or feeling will wholly want its adequate sign, because another has two. Hereupon that which has been well called the process of "desynonymizing" begins—that is, of gradually coming to discriminate in use between words which have hitherto been accounted perfectly equivalent, and, as such, indifferently employed. It is a positive enriching of a language when this process is felt to be accomplished, when two or more words which were once promiscuously used, are felt to have had each its own peculiar domain assigned to it, which it shall not itself overstep, upon which the others shall not encroach. This may seem at first sight but as the better regulation of old territory; for all practical purposes it is the acquisition of new.

It is not to be supposed that this desynonymizing process is effected according to any prearranged purpose or plan. The working genius of the language accomplishes its own objects, causes these synonymous words insensibly to fall off from one another, and to

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acquire separate and peculiar meanings. The most that any single writer can do, save indeed in the terminology of science, is, as has been observed, to assist an already existing inclination, to bring to the consciousness of all that which may already have been implicitly felt by many, and thus to hasten the process of this disengagement, or, as it has been excellently exprest, "to regulate and ordinate the evident nusus and tendency of the popular usage into a severe definition"; and establish on a firm basis the distinction, accounted perfectly equivalent, and, as such, so that it shall not be lost sight of or brought into question again. This, for instance, Wordsworth did in respect of the words "imagination" and "fancy." Before he wrote, it was, I suppose, obscurely felt by most that in "imagination" there was more of the earnest, in "fancy" of the play, of the spirit, that the first was a loftier faculty and gift than the second; yet for all this the words were continually, and not without loss, confounded. He first, in the Preface to his "Lyrical Ballads," rendered it impossible that any one who had read and mastered what he had written on the two words, should remain unconscious any longer of the essential difference existing between them.

Let me remark, by the way, how many other words in English are still waiting for such a discrimination. Thus how great an

ethical gain would it be, how much clearness would it bring into men's thoughts and feelings, if the distinction which exists in Latin between "vindicta" and "ultio," that the first is a moral act, the just punishment of the sinner by his God, of the criminal by the judge, the other an act in which the self-gratification of one who counts himself injured or offended is sought, could in like manner be fully established, it does vaguely exist, between our "vengeance" and "revenge"; so that only "vengeance" (with the verb "avenge") should be ascribed to God, and to men acting as the executors of his righteous doom; while all in which their evil and sinful passions are the impulsive motive should be exclusively termed "revenge." As it now is, the moral disapprobation which cleaves, and cleaves justly, to "revenge," is oftentimes transferred almost unconsciously to "vengeance"; while yet without vengeance it is impossible to conceive in an evil world any assertion of righteousness, any moral government whatsoever. These distinctions which still wait to be made we may fitly regard as so much reversionary wealth in our mother tongue

The two causes which I mentioned above, the fact that English is in the main a compromise between the languages spoken by the Anglo-Saxon and the Norman, and the further circumstance that it has received, wel-

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comed, and found place for many later additions, these causes have together effected that we possess in English a great many duplicates, not to speak of triplicates, or even such a quintuplicate as that which I adduced just now, where the Saxon, French, Italian, Latin, and Greek had each given us a word. Let me mention a few duplicate substantives, Anglo-Saxon and Latin; thus we have "shepherd" and "pastor"; "feeling" and "sentiment"; "handbook" and "manual"; "shire" and "county"; "ship" and "nave"; "anger" and "ire"; "grief" and "dolour"; "kingdom" and "realm"; "love" and "charity"; "feather" and "plume"; "forerunner" and "precursor"; "freedom" and "liberty"; "murder" and "homicide"; "moons" and "lunes"—a word which has not been met with in the singular. Sometimes, in theology and science especially, we have gone both to the Latin and to the Greek, and drawn the same word from them both; thus "deist" and "theist"; "numeration" and "arithmetic"; "Revelation" and "Apocalypse"; "temporal" and "chronical"; "compassion" and "sympathy"; "supposition" and "hypothesis"; "dactyle" and "digit." But to return to the Anglo-Saxon and Latin, the main factors of our tongue, besides duplicate substantives, we have duplicate verbs, such as "to heal" and "to cure"; "to whiten" and "to blanch"; "to soften" and "to mollify";

"to cloke" and "to palliate"; with many more. Duplicate adjectives also are numerous, as "shady" and "umbrageous"; "unreadable" and "illegible"; "almighty" and "omnipotent." Occasionally where only one substantive, an Anglo-Saxon, exists, yet the adjectives are duplicate, and the English, which has not adopted the Latin substantive, has yet admitted the adjective; thus "burden" has not merely "burdensome" but also "onerous," while yet "onus" has found no place with us; "priest" has "priestly" and "sacerdotal"; "king" has "kingly," "regal," which is purely Latin, and "royal," which is Latin distilled through the Norman. "Bodily" and "corporal," "boyish" and "puerile," "bloody" and "sanguine," "fearful" and "timid," "manly" and "virile," "womanly" and "feminine," "starry" and "stellar," "yearly" and "annual," "wooden" and "ligneous," may all be placed in the same list. Nor are these more than a handful of words out of the number which might be adduced, and I think you would find both pleasure and profit in seeking to add to these lists, and as far as you are able, to make them gradually complete.

I will observe, by the way, that I have only adduced instances in which both the words have continued to maintain their ground in our spoken and written language to the present day. Other cases are not few in which these

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duplicates once existed, but in which the one word has in the end proved fatal to and has extinguished the other. Thus "resurrection" and "again rising" no doubt existed contemporaneously; Wiclif uses them indifferently; we may say the same of "judge" and "doomsman," "adultery" and "spouse-breach," and of many words more. In each of these cases, however, instead of dividing the intellectual domain between them, which perhaps would not always have been easy, the one word has definitely put the other out of use; the Latin word, as you will observe, has triumphed over the Anglo-Saxon. I am not of those who consider these triumphs of the Latin element of our speech to be in every case a matter of regret; tho I would not willingly have seen "pavone," which Spenser would have introduced, for our much older "peacock"; or "terremote," which Gower employs, for "earthquake," or other such Latinisms as these.

But to return; if we look closely at those other words which have succeeded in maintaining side by side their ground, we shall not fail to observe that in almost every instance they have asserted for themselves separate spheres of meaning, that altho not in etymology, they have still in use become more or less distinct. Thus we use "shepherd" almost always in its primary meaning, keeper of sheep; while "pastor" is exclusively used

in the tropical sense, one that feeds the flock of God; at the same time the language having only the one adjective, "pastoral," that is of necessity common to both. "Love" and "charity" are used in our authorized version of Scripture promiscuously, and out of the sense of their equivalence are made to represent one and the same Greek word; but in modern use "charity" has come predominantly to signify one particular manifestation of love, the supply of the bodily needs of others, "love" continuing to express the affection of the soul. "Ship" remains in its literal meaning, while "nave" has become a symbolic term used in sacred architecture alone. So with "illegible" and "unreadable," the first is applied to the handwriting, the second to the subject-matter written; thus, a man writes an "illegible" hand; he has published an "unreadable" book. So, too, it well becomes boys to be "boyish," but not men to be "puerile." Or take "to blanch" and "to whiten": we have grown to use the first in the sense of to withdraw coloring matter; thus, we "blanch" almonds or linen; the cheek is "blanched" with fear, that is, by the withdrawing of the blood; but we "whiten" a wall, not by the withdrawing of some other color, but by the superinducing of white; thus "whited sepulchers." "To palliate" is not now used, tho it once was, in the sense of wholly "to cloak" or cover

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over, as it might be, our sins, but in that of extenuating; "to palliate" our faults is not to hide them altogether, but to seek to diminish their guilt in part.

It might be urged that there was a certain preparedness in these words to separate off in their meaning from one another, inasmuch as they originally belonged to different stocks; nor would I deny that this may have assisted; but we find the same process at work where original difference of stock can have supplied no such assistance. "Astronomy" and "astrology" are both drawn from the Greek, nor is there any reason beforehand why the second should not be in as honorable use as the first; for it signifies the *reason*, as "astronomy" the *law*, of the stars. But seeing there is a true and a false science of the stars, both needing words to utter them, it has come to pass that in our later use, "astrology" designates always that pretended science of imposture, which affecting to submit the moral freedom of men to the influence of the heavenly bodies, prognosticates future events from the position of these, as contrasted with "astronomy," that true science which investigates the laws of the heavenly bodies in their relations to one another and to the planet upon which we dwell.

As these are both from the Greek, so "despair" and "diffidence" are both, tho the second more directly than the first, from

the Latin. At a period not very long past the difference between them was hardly appreciable; it certainly could not be affirmed of one that it was very much stronger than the other. If in one the absence of all *hope*, in the other that of all *faith*, was implied. In proof I would only refer you to a book with which I am sure every English schoolmaster will wish to be familiar, I mean "The Pilgrim's Progress," where Mistress *Diffidence* is Giant *Despair's* wife, and not a whit behind him in deadly enmity to the pilgrims; even as Jeremy Taylor speaks of the impenitent sinner's "*diffidence* in the hour of death," meaning, as the context plainly shows, his despair. But to what end two words for one and the same thing? And thus "*diffidence*" did not retain that force of meaning which it had at the first, but little by little assumed a more mitigated sense (Hobbes speaks of "*men's diffidence*"; that is, distrust, "*of one another*") till it has come in our present English to signify a becoming distrust of ourselves, an humble estimate of our own powers, with only a slight intimation in the word, as in the later uses of "*verecundia*," that perhaps this distrust is carried too far.

Again, "*interference*" and "*interposition*" are both from the Latin; and here, too, it lies not by any anterior necessity in the several derivations of the words, that they should

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have the different shades of meaning which yet they have obtained among us—the Latin verbs which form their latter halves being about as strong one as the other. And yet in our practical use “interference” is something offensive; it is the pushing in of himself between two parties on the part of a third, who was not asked, and is not thanked for his pains, and who as the feeling of the word implies, had no business there; while “interposition” is employed to express the friendly peace-making mediation of one whom the act well became, and who, even if he was not specially invited thereunto, is still thanked for what he has done. How real an increase is it in the wealth and capabilities of a language thus to have discriminated such words as these; and to be able to express acts outwardly the same by different words, as we would praise or blame them.

Let us now take some words which are not thus desynonymized by usage only, but which have an inherent etymological distinction—one, however, which it might be easy to overlook, which, so long as we dwell on the surface of the word, we shall overlook; and let us see whether we shall not be gainers by bringing out the distinction into clear consciousness. Here are the words “arrogant,” “presumptuous,” and “insolent”; we often use them promiscuously; yet let us examine them a little more closely, and ask ourselves, as

soon as we have succeeded in tracing the lines of demarcation between them, whether we are not now in possession of three distinct thoughts, instead of a single confused one. Thus, he is "arrogant," who claims the observance and homage of others as his due (*ad rogo*), does not wait for them to offer, but himself demands it; or who, having right to one sort of observance, claims another to which he has no right. Thus, it was "arrogance" in Nebuchadnezzar, when he required that all men should fall down before the image which he had reared. He, a man, was claiming for man's work the homage which belonged only to God. But one is "presumptuous" who *takes* things to himself *before* he has acquired any title to them (*prae sumo*) the young man who already takes the place of the old, the learner who speaks as with the authority of the teacher. By and by all this may very justly be his, but it is "presumption" to anticipate it now. "Insolent" means properly no more than unusual; to act "insolently" is to act unusually. The offensive sense which the word has acquired rests upon the feeling that there is a certain well-understood rule of society, a recognized standard of moral behavior, to which each of its members should conform. The "insolent" man is one who violates this rule, who breaks through this order, acting in an *unaccustomed* manner. The same sense

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of the orderly being also the moral, speaks out in the word "irregular"; a man of "irregular," is for us a man of immoral, life; and yet more strongly in the Latin language, which has but one word (*mores*) for customs and morals.

Or consider the following words: "to hate," "to loathe," "to detest," and "to abhor." Each of them rests on an image entirely distinct from the others; two, the first and second, being Anglo-Saxon, and the others Latin. "To hate" is properly to be *inflamed* with passionate dislike, the word being connected with "heat," "hot"; just as we speak, using the same figure, of persons being "incensed" with anger, or of their anger "kindling"; "ira" and "uro" being perhaps related. "To loathe" is properly to feel nausea, and the turning of the stomach at that which excites first natural, and then by a transfer, moral disgust. "To detest" is to bear witness against, not to be able to keep silence in regard of something, to feel ourselves obliged to lift up our voice and testimony against it. "To abhor" is to shrink shuddering back, as one would from an object of fear, an hissing serpent rising in one's path. Thus our blest Lord "hated" to see his Father's house profaned, when, the zeal of that house consuming Him, He drove forth in anger the profaners from it; He "loathed" the lukewarmness of the Laodiceans, when

He threatened to spew them out of his mouth; He "detested" the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Scribes, when He proclaimed their sin and uttered those eight woes against them (Matt. 23); He "abhorred" the evil suggestions of Satan, when He bade the Tempter to get behind Him, seeking to put a distance between Himself and him.

You will observe that in most of the words which I have adduced, I have sought to refer their usage to their etymologies, to follow the guidance of these, and by the same aid to trace the lines of demarcation which divide them. For I can not but think it an omission in a very instructive volume upon synonyms which has lately been edited by Archbishop Whately, and a partial diminution of its usefulness, that in the valuation of words reference is so seldom made to these, the writer relying almost entirely on present usage, and the tact and instinct of a cultivated mind for the appreciation of them aright. The accomplished author of this book indeed justifies this omission on the ground that a book of synonyms has to do with the present relative value of words, not with their roots and derivations; and, further, that a reference to these brings in often what is only a disturbing force in the process, tending to confuse rather than to clear. But while it is quite true that words may often ride very slackly at anchor on their etymologies, may be borne hither and

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thither by the shifting tides and currents of usage, yet are they for the most part still holden by them. Very few have broken away and drifted from their moorings altogether. A "novelist," or writer of *new* tales in the present day is very different from a "novelist" or upholder of *new* theories in politics and religion of two hundred years ago; yet the idea of *newness* is common to them both. A "naturalist" was then a denier of revealed truth, of any but *natural* religion; he is now an investigator, and often a pious one, of *nature* and of her laws; yet the word has remained true to its etymology all the while. A "methodist" was once a follower of a certain "method" of philosophical induction, now of a "method" in the fulfilment of religious duties; but in either case "method," or orderly progression, is the soul of the word. Take other words which have changed or modified their meaning—"plantations," for instance, which were once colonies of men (and, indeed, we still "plant" a colony), but are now nurseries of young trees, and you will find the same to hold good. "Ecstasy" *was* madness, it *is* delight, but in neither case has it departed from its fundamental meaning, since it is the nature alike of this and that *to set men out of and beside themselves*.

And even when the fact is not so obvious as in these cases, the etymology of a word exercises an unconscious influence upon its

uses, oftentimes makes itself felt when least expected, so that a word, after seeming quite to have forgotten, will, after longest wanderings, return to it again. And one of the arts of a great poet or prose writer, who wishes to add emphasis to his style, to bring out all the latent forces of his native tongue, will very often consist in reconnecting a word by his use of it with its original derivation, in not suffering it to forget itself and its father's house, tho it would. How often and with what signal effect Milton does this; while yet how often the fact that he is doing it, even by scholars passes unobserved. And even if all this were not so, yet the past history of a word, which history must needs *start* from its derivation, how soon soever that may be left behind, is surely a necessary element in its present valuation. A man may be wholly different now from what once he was, yet not the less to know his antecedents is needful, before we can ever perfectly understand his present self; and the same holds good with a word.

There is often a moral value in the possession of synonyms, enabling us, as they do, to say exactly what we intend, without exaggeration or the putting of more into our words than we feel in our hearts, allowing us, as one has said, to be at once courteous and precise. Such moral advantage there is, for example, in the choice which we have be-

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tween the words "to felicitate" and "to congratulate," for the expressing of our sentiments and wishes in regard of the good fortune that happens to others. "To felicitate" another is to wish him happiness, without affirming that his happiness is also ours. Thus, out of that general good-will with which we ought to regard all, we might "felicitate" one almost a stranger to us; nay, more, I can honestly felicitate one on his appointment to a post, or attainment of an honor, even tho I may not consider him the fittest to have obtained it, tho I should have been glad if another had done so; I can desire and hope, that is, that it may bring all joy and happiness to him. But I could not, without a violation of truth, "congratulate" him, or that stranger whose prosperity awoke no lively delight in my heart; for when I "congratulate" a person (*con gratulor*) I declare that I am sharer in his joy, that what has rejoiced him has rejoiced also me. We have all, I dare say, felt, even without having analyzed the distinction between the words, that "congratulate" is a far heartier word than "felicitate," and one with which it much better becomes us to welcome the good fortune of a friend; and the analysis, as you perceive, perfectly justifies the feeling. "Felicitations" are little better than compliments; "congratulations" are the expression of a genuine sympathy and joy.

Let me illustrate the importance of synonymous distinctions by another example, by the words, "to invent" and "to discover"; "invention" and "discovery." How slight may seem to us the distinction between them, even if we see any at all. Yet try them a little closer, try them, which is the true proof, by aid of examples, and you will perceive that by no means can they be indifferently used—that, on the contrary, a great principle lies at the root of their distinction. Thus, we speak of the "invention" of printing, the "discovery" of America. Shift these words, and speak, for instance, of the "invention" of America; you feel at once how unsuitable the language is. And why? Because Columbus did not make that to be, which before him had not been. America was there, before he revealed it to European eyes; but that which before was, he showed to be; he withdrew the veil which hitherto had concealed it; he "discovered" it. So, too, we speak of Newton "discovering" the law of gravitation; he drew aside the veil whereby men's eyes were hindered from perceiving it, but the law had existed from the beginning of the world, and would have existed whether he or any other man had traced it or no; neither was it in any way affected by the discovery of it which he had made. But Gutenberg, or whoever else it may have been to whom the honor belongs, "invented" printing; he made some-

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thing to be which hitherto was not. In like manner, Harvey "discovered" the circulation of the blood; but Watt "invented" the steam-engine; and we speak, with a true distinction, of the "inventions" of Art, the "discoveries" of Science. In the very highest matters of all, it is deeply important that we be aware of and observe the distinction. In religion there have been many "discoveries," but (in true religion, I mean) no "inventions." Many discoveries—but God in each case the discoverer; He draws away the veils, one veil after another, that have hidden Him from men; the discovery or revelation is from Himself, for no man by searching has found out God; and therefore, wherever anything offers itself as an "invention" in matters of religion, it proclaims itself a little—all self-devised worships, all religions which man projects from his own heart. Just that is known of God which He is pleased to make known, and no more; and men's recognizing or refusing to recognize in no ways affects it. They may deny or may acknowledge Him, but He continues the same.

As involving in like manner a distinction which can not safely be lost sight of, how important the difference, of which the existence is asserted by our possession of the two words, "to apprehend" and "to comprehend," with their substantives, "apprehension" and "comprehension." For, indeed,

we “apprehend” many truths, which we do not “comprehend.” The great mysteries of our faith—the doctrine, for instance, of the Holy Trinity—we lay hold upon it (*adprehendo*), we hang on it, our souls live by it; but we do not “comprehend” it; that is, we do not take it all in; for it is a necessary attribute of God that He is *incomprehensible*; if He were not so, either He would not be God, or the being that comprehended Him would be God also. But it also belongs to the idea of God that He may be “apprehended,” tho not “comprehended,” by His reasonable creatures; He has made them to know Him; tho not to know Him *all*, to “apprehend,” tho not to “comprehend” Him. We may transfer with profit the same distinction to matters not quite so solemn. I read Goldsmith’s “Traveller,” or one of Gay’s Fables, and I feel that I “comprehend” it: I do not believe, that is, that there was anything in the poet’s mind or intention, which I have not in the reading reproduced in my own. But I read “Hamlet,” or “King Lear”: here I “apprehend” much; I have wondrous glimpses of the poet’s intention and aim; but I do not for an instant suppose that I have “comprehended,” taken in, that is, all that was in his mind in the writing; or that his purpose does not stretch in manifold directions far beyond the range of my vision; and I am sure there are few who would not

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shrink from affirming, at least if they at all realized the force of the words they were using, that they "comprehended" Shakespeare; however much they may "apprehend" in him.

How often "opposite" and "contrary" are used as if there was no difference between them, and yet there is a most essential one, one which perhaps we may best express by saying that "opposites" *complete*, while "contraries" *exclude* one another. Thus, the most "opposite" moral or mental characteristics may meet in one and the same person, while to say that the most "contrary" did so would be manifestly absurd; for example, a soldier may be at once *prudent* and *bold*, for these are opposites; he could not be at once *prudent* and *rash*, for these are contraries. We may *love* and *fear* at the same time and the same person; we pray in the Litany that we may *love* and *fear* God, the two being opposites, and thus the complements of one another; but to pray that we might *love* and *hate* would be as illogical as it would be impious, for these are contraries, and could no more coexist together than white and black, hot and cold, at the same time in the same subject. Or to take another illustration, *sweet* and *sour* are "opposites," *sweet* and *bitter* are "contraries." It will be seen then that there is always a certain relation between "opposites"; they unfold

themselves tho in different directions from the same root, as the positive and negative forces of electricity, and in their very opposition uphold and sustain one another; while "contraries" encounter one another from quarters quite diverse, and one only subsists in the exact degree that it puts out of working the other. Surely, this distinction can not be an unimportant one either in the region of ethics or elsewhere.

It will happen continually that rightly to distinguish between two words will throw great light upon some controversy in which those words play a principal part, nay, may virtually put an end to that controversy altogether. Thus, when Hobbes, with a true instinct, would have laid deep the foundations of atheism and despotism together, resolving all right into might, and not merely robbing them, if he could, of the power, but denying to them the duty, of obeying God rather than man, his sophisms could stand only so long as it was not perceived that "compulsion" and "obligation," with which he juggled, conveyed two ideas perfectly distinct, indeed disparate, in kind. They collapsed at once, so soon as it was perceived that what pertained to one had been transferred to the other by a mere confusion of terms and cunning sleight of hand, the one being a *physical*, the other a *moral* necessity.

There is, indeed, no such fruitful source

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of confusion and mischief as this—two words are tacitly assumed as equivalent, and therefore exchangeable, and then that which may be assumed, and with truth, of one, is assumed also of the other, of which it is not true. Thus, for instance, it often is with “instruction” and “education.” Can not we “instruct” a child, it is asked, can not we teach it geography, or arithmetic, or grammar, quite independently of the Catechism, or even of the Scriptures? No doubt you may; but can you “educate,” without bringing moral and spiritual forces to bear upon the mind and affections of the child? And you must not be permitted to transfer the admissions which we freely made in regard of “instruction,” as tho they also held good in respect of “education.” For what is “education?” Is it a furnishing of a man from without with knowledge and facts and information? Or is it a drawing forth from within and a training of the spirit, of the true humanity which is latent within him? Is the process of education the filling of the child’s mind, as a cistern is filled with waters brought in buckets from some other source, or the opening up of its own fountains? Now if we give any heed to the word “education,” and to the voice which speaks in the word, we shall not long be in doubt. Education must educe, being from “educare,” which is but another form of “educere”; and that is

“to draw out,” and not to “put in.” “To draw out” what is in the child, the immortal spirit which is there, this is the end of education; and so much the word declares. The putting in is indeed most needful, that is, the child must be instructed as well as educated, and the word “instruction” just means furnishing; but not instructed instead of educated. He must first have powers awakened in him, measures of spiritual value given him; and then he will know how to deal with the facts of this outward world; then instruction in these will profit him; but not without the higher training, still less as a substitute for it.

It has occasionally happened that the question of which out of two apparent synonyms should be adopted in some important state document has been debated with no little earnestness and vigor; as at the great English Revolution of 1688, when the two Houses of Parliament were for a considerable time at issue whether it should be declared of James the Second, that he had “abdicated,” or “deserted,” the throne. This might seem at first sight a mere strife about words, and yet, in reality, serious constitutional questions were involved in the selection of the one word or the other. The Commons insisted on the word “abdicated,” not as wishing to imply that in any act of the late king there had been an official renunciation of the crown,

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which would have been manifestly untrue; but because "abdicated" to their minds alone exprest the fact that James had so borne himself as virtually to have entirely renounced, disowned, and relinquished the crown, to have irrecoverably forfeited and separated himself from it, and from any right to it forever; while "deserted" would have seemed to leave room and an opening for a return, which they were determined to declare forever excluded; as, were it said of a husband that he had "deserted" his wife, or of a soldier that he had "deserted" his colors, this language would imply not only that he might, but that he was bound to return. Lord Somers' speech on the occasion is a masterly specimen of synonymous discrimination, and an example of the uses in highest matters of state to which it may be turned.

Let me press upon you, in conclusion, some few of the many advantages to be derived from the habit of distinguishing synonyms. These advantages we might presume to be many, even tho we could not ourselves perceive them; for how often do the great masters of style in every tongue, perhaps none so often as Cicero, the greatest of all, pause to discriminate between the words they are using; how much care and labor, how much subtlety of thought, they have counted well bestowed on the operation; how much importance do they avowedly attach to it; not

to say that their works, even where they do not intend it, will be a continual lesson in this respect: a great writer merely in the accuracy with which he employs words will always be exercising us in synonymous discrimination. But the advantages of attending to them need not be taken on trust; they are evident. How great a part of true wisdom it is to be able to distinguish between things that differ, things seemingly, but not really, alike, this is remarkably attested by our words "discernment" and "discretion"; which are now used as equivalent, the first to "insight," the second to "prudence"; while yet in their earlier usage, and according to their etymology, being both from "*discerno*," they signify the power of so seeing things that in the seeing we distinguish and separate them one from another. Such were originally "discernment" and "discretion," and such in great measure they are still. And in words is a material ever at hand on which to train the spirit to a skilfulness in this; on which to exercise its sagacity through the habit of distinguishing there where it would be so easy to confound. Nor is this habit of discrimination only valuable as a part of our intellectual training; but what a positive increase is it of mental wealth when we have learned to discern between things which really differ, but have been hitherto confused in our minds; and have made these

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distinctions permanently our own in the only way by which they can be made secure, that is, by assigning to each its appropriate word and peculiar sign.

What a help, moreover, will it prove to the writing of a good English style, if, instead of having many words before us, and choosing almost at random and at haphazard from among them, we at once know which, and which only, we ought in the case before us to employ, which will be the exact vesture of our thoughts. It is the first characteristic of a well-drest man that his clothes fit him; they are not too small and shrunken here, too large and loose there. Now it is precisely such a prime characteristic of a good style that the words fit close to the thoughts: they will not be too big here, hanging like a giant's robe on the limbs of a dwarf; nor too small there, as a boy's garments into which the man has painfully and ridiculously thrust himself. You do not feel in one place that the writer means more than he has succeeded in saying; in another that he has said more than he means; or in a third something beside what his intention was: and all this, from a lack of dexterity in employing the instrument of language, of precision in knowing what words would be the exactest correspondents and fittest exponents of his thought.

And let us not suppose this power of exactly saying what we mean, and neither more

nor less than we mean, to be merely an elegant mental accomplishment. It is indeed this, and perhaps there is no power so surely indicative of a high and accurate training of the intellectual faculties. But it is also much more than this: it has a moral meaning as well. It is nearly allied to morality, inasmuch as it is nearly connected with truthfulness. Every man who has himself in any degree cared for the truth, and occupied himself in seeking it, is more or less aware how much of the falsehood in the world passes current under the concealment of words, how many strifes and controversies—

“Which feed the simple, and offend the wise.”

find all or nearly all their fuel and their nourishment in words carelessly or dishonestly employed. And when a man has had any actual experience of this fact, and has at all perceived how far this mischief reaches, he is sometimes almost tempted to say with Shakespeare's clown, “Words are grown so false, I am loath to prove reason with them.” He can not, however, forego their employment; not to say that he will presently perceive that this falseness of theirs whereof he accuses them, this cheating power of words, is not of their proper use, but only of their abuse; he will see that, however they may have been enlisted in the service of lies, they are yet of themselves most true; and that

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where the bane is, there the antidote should be sought as well. Ask, then, words what they mean, that you may deliver yourselves, that you may help to deliver others, from the tyranny of words, and from the strife of "word-warriors." Learn to distinguish between them, for you have the authority of Hooker, that "the mixture of those things by speech, which by nature are divided, is the mother of all error." And altho I can not promise you that the study of synonyms, or the acquaintance with derivations, or any other knowledge but the very highest knowledge of all, will deliver you from the temptation to misuse this or any other gift of God—a temptation which always lies so near us—yet I am sure that these studies rightly pursued will do much in leading us to stand in awe of this gift of words, and to tremble at the thought of turning it to any other than those worthy ends for which God has endowed us with so divine a gift.

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